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PREACHING BY PARABLE

J. W. W. MOERAN



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PREACHING BY PARABLE

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Illustrations

PREACHING BY PARABLE

By

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"TEACHING BY ILLUSTRATION," "McCULLAGH OF AIVANSH," ETC.

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PREFACE

WHEN the early disciples were first commissioned by our Lord, we read that "He sent them forth to preach."

"That is still the first function of the ordained ministers of Christ. All religious revivals which have arisen within the Church have been brought about by this ministry of preaching. And it is what is needed now. If the Church can enlist and send forth a strong body of earnest, able men, deeply imbued with personal loyalty to Christ and trained by a wide and refined culture to present the good news of Christ to the multitude of thoughtful men and women who are hungering for spiritual food, we may look for a wonderful result."¹

The sermon that attracts people to church and builds them up in the faith must be thoughtful and instructive, giving clear teaching about the essential facts of the Christian religion. But if interest is to be awakened and sustained, if the emotions are to be stirred, precept should be enforced by parable, and the preacher will seek to illustrate his theme by incidents drawn from the pages of history or biography, or by lessons taught in Nature's school of analogy, and sometimes he will add the human touch of a simple story gleaned from his own experience.

The great value of teaching religious truth by means of parable or illustration is conspicuously shown in John Bunyan's world-famous allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, of which Dr. Brown has written: "One of the foremost causes of its success is that, with such singular felicity, it meets a pre-existing love of metaphor, fable, parable and allegory, which is deeply rooted in human nature."

¹ W. L. Paige-Cox, Archdeacon of Chester, letter to the *Morning Post*, January 6, 1927.

In a sermon preached in Westminster Abbey on November 27, 1928, Dr. Hensley Henson (Lord Bishop of Durham) said: "Certainly the human mind everywhere inclines to this method of self-expression. It insists on so reading the world of phenomena in terms of symbolism, and so binding associations upon every scene of temporal experience, that man's entire secular environment becomes vocal with spiritual witness, and the mysteries of eternity look out on him from the fleeting circumstance of time. For this very reason parable and allegory have been employed by the religious teachers of the race, and most of all by Him Who holds the unchallengeable primacy among them."¹

Let me add one more testimony:

"THE TEACHING OF JESUS: . . . He selects the Twelve and develops the teaching method of the parable. Taking common events of normal life, He associates God's presence with them, showing to those who have eyes for it the relationship between the truths of religion and the facts of daily experience. Along with His lessons He sends them out to express and pass on what they have learned. . . . So He leads His disciples on till they are ready for the supreme parable, Himself. Having learnt to see God in heaven and mustard-seed, they now learn to see Him in their comrade and leader, and to confess Jesus as the Christ."²

To insist thus on the value of parabolic teaching does not mean that illustrations should be used wholesale. Some sermons, indeed, are better without them. For instance, the exposition of one of our Lord's parables or miracles seldom needs illumination from outside sources; it is a

¹ At a special service in connection with the Tercentenary of John Bunyan.

² *The World-Message of Christianity; Messages and Recommendations of the enlarged Meeting of the International Missionary Council, held at Jerusalem, March 24 to April 8, 1928*, p. 19.

picture in itself, displaying by its own light the truth it is intended to convey. Or, again, when a sustained argument is employed to unfold some great doctrine, the preacher may need all the time at his disposal for that purpose, and the clear reasoning of his theme leaves no space for adventitious aid. Also it must be acknowledged that even the best of good things may be misused or misapplied. This is so when a preacher makes the mistake of substituting analogy for argument, as if a story or allegory, however well told, could in itself satisfy the intellect and convince the understanding. Such a mistake is not exclusively the error of Christian teachers. "The great weakness of Indian Philosophy is that it has ever used illustration as though it always served as argument."¹

Again, it is a poor subterfuge to resort to, when the preacher relates a telling incident merely for the purpose of embellishing a sermon, which needs relief from its own dulness. Such a motive is unworthy of the Gospel message. The late Dr. J. H. Jowett was one of the greatest preachers of our day, deeply spiritual and thoughtful. He loved parables from nature and made a free use of simple and homely illustrations, well chosen and devoid of anything that might savour of the fanciful or fantastic. He once said that "sermon illustrations should be like street lamps, giving guidance for wayfarers to walk by, not like fairy lanterns to be admired because of their pretty colours."

When full acknowledgment has been made of the misuse or want of judgment occasionally shown, through the lack of some fine quality or spiritual instinct in the preacher's mind, it remains true that carefully chosen illustrations add immensely to the value and force of a sermon, and no man whose ambition it is to attract listeners and to win souls can afford to dispense with their use.

¹ *Christian Thought and Hindu Philosophy*, vol. viii., p. 156, Religious Tract Society.

The work of preparing sermons is one of many duties which have to be undertaken by some of the busiest men in the Church ; they cannot always evolve from the store-house of memory the incident or emblem that will best illumine the sermon or address that must be produced under time-pressure. This little book is offered as an aid to their pulpit ministry.

A good many of the incidents herein related cannot properly be called parables ; they are just stories or facts in human life or history which may be used to point a moral or illustrate a doctrine. But I think there are enough of what may rightly be called parables to justify the title of the work. Some of the illustrations are taken from copyright works, permission to use them having been kindly given by the publishers.

J. W. W. MOERAN.

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PREACHING BY PARABLE

I

DIVINE POWER AND LOVE

(2)

CREATION AND MAN.

Dr. A. Russell Wallace, who shared with Charles Darwin the distinction of discovering the theory of Natural Selection, towards the close of his long life, said: "An honest and unswerving scrutiny of Nature forces upon the mind this certain truth—that at some period of the earth's history there was an act of creation, a giving to the earth of something which before it had not possessed; and from that gift, the gift of life, has come the infinite and wonderful population of living forms. Then, I hold that there was a subsequent act of creation, a giving to man, when he had emerged from his ape-like ancestry, of a spirit or soul. Nothing in evolution can account for the soul of man. The difference between man and the other animals is unbridgable. Mathematics alone are sufficient to prove in man the possession of a faculty unexistent in other creatures. Then there is music and the artistic faculty. It is clear beyond all doubt or question that the soul of man was a separate creation."

GOD AND MAN—CO-OPERATION. *(with him)*

Over the gateway of the French College of Surgeons is (or used to be) this inscription: "I dressed his wounds, God healed him."

This acknowledgment expresses a great moral principle—the union of God and man in the work of redemption. In His condescending grace and wisdom God gives us a share with Himself in His beneficent purposes for the welfare and happiness of our fellow-men. If we fail in our duty we thwart His will and wrong each other.

GOD'S CARE FOR EACH ONE.

There is no kind of doubt more common, even in the heart of a true believer, than the question which will arise from time to time: "Can the great God who created the universe care for and take knowledge of me, an insignificant unit among the many millions who inhabit this earth, itself one of countless millions of worlds?" It is hard for the finite comprehension of man to grasp and realise how simple it must be for the mind of the Infinite God to know everything about everybody and to make each one of His children the object of His special care.

Many years ago this question troubled me. One night, when I had gone to sleep under its cloud of doubt, I seemed, as in a dream or vision, to be standing on a hilltop overlooking a vast tract of country, with forest, plain and river spread out for many miles all around. Overhead the sun was shining, his beams of light and heat touching separately unnumbered millions of leaves on the trees and flowers in the meadows and countless grains of ripening corn on many a field. Each and all of them were, at the same time, being touched by the life-giving power of the sun, each one receiving as much individual care as if there were no others for the sunshine to quicken into life and caress with his warm breath. And the conviction was borne in upon me with the impulse of a great joy: "If the material sun can do all this for inanimate nature, surely He Who made the sun and is the Lord of Nature can do as much for the souls of men whom He has made in His own likeness." J

GOD—WHAT IS HE LIKE?

There is an old story told about Hiero, King of Syracuse. One day he sent for Simonides the philosopher, and said: "I want to know what God is like; can you tell me?" Simonides replied: "Give me two days in which to think how I shall answer your question." When the two days were up he came to the King and said: "Give me four days longer." At the end of four days he asked for eight days, and then he returned to the King and said: "The more I think about God, the more bewildered does my mind become; I search but I cannot find; God is beyond

the limit of man's knowledge; I can give no answer, O king, to thy question."

Human philosophy, at its best, can do little more than guess the nature and the character of God. Something else is needed if we are to know Him as He is—a revelation from Himself. This He has given us through the inspired books of the Bible, where we have God's final revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ.

THE LORD LIKENED UNTO AN EAGLE.

That observant lover of nature, William J. Long, after describing the eaglet's fears and the mother eagle's vain efforts to make it use its wings, writes:

"Suddenly, as if discouraged, she rose well above him. I held my breath; for I knew what was coming. The little fellow stood on the edge of the nest, looking down on the plunge he dare not take. There was a sharp cry from behind, which made him alert, tense as a watch spring. The next instant the mother eagle had swooped, striking the nest at his feet, sending his support of twigs and himself with them out into the air together. He was afloat now, afloat on the blue air in spite of himself, and flapped lustily for life. Over him, under him, beside him, hovered the mother on tireless wings, calling softly that she was there. But the awful fear of the depths . . . was upon the little one; his flapping grew more wild; he fell faster and faster. Suddenly—more in fright, it appeared to me, than because he had spent his strength—he lost his balance and tipped head downward in the air. It was all over now; he folded his wings to be dashed in pieces among the trees below. Then, like a flash the old mother eagle shot under him, his despairing feet touched her broad shoulders between her wings. He righted himself, rested an instant, found his head; then she dropped like a shot from under him, leaving him to come down on his own wings. . . . It was all the work of an instant before I lost them among the trees far below. And when I found them again with my glass, the eaglet was in the top of a great pine, and the mother was feeding him. And then standing alone in the great wilderness it flashed upon me for the first time just what the wise old prophet meant . . .: 'As the eagle

stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings—so the Lord' (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12)."¹

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE SINNER.

It is sometimes alleged that God's free pardon and acceptance of the worst of sinners, if he repent of his wrongdoing, is cheap, and encourages men to make light of sin. "If, indeed, it be true," some people say, "then we can sin as much and as often as we like and get forgiveness each time." In combating this perversion of a great truth, the Rev. George MacLeod said: "I knew a young man, in Edinburgh, belonging to a superior working-class family, who was convicted of theft and sentenced to imprisonment, to the grief and shame of his parents. Some friends were allowed to visit him in the gaol, where they found him hard and defiant. They tried to break down this feeling and lead him to repentance. One of them, in conversation, sought by psycho-analysis to probe his mind and discover the clue to his lapse. Another approached him on the sporting side and said, 'You haven't played the game'; while a third appealed to the religious instincts of his upbringing. All was in vain; he continued sullen and obdurate to the end. When the day of his release came, he left the prison early in the morning and came straight to my house. He said to me: 'I don't know where to go or what to do; can you advise me?' 'I advise you to go home,' was my answer. For some time he hesitated, but at length he yielded to my persuasion and went home. He found his mother was expecting him; she opened the door to him, and kissed him with as much love and tenderness as she had ever shown before. On the table a nice breakfast was laid; his best clothes were brushed and put out ready for him to wear, and she told him that a good job was awaiting him. In the evening he came again to see me. I noticed a marked change in him; instead of the hard, sullen look there was a new expression on his face. 'Well,' I said, 'how do you feel about things now, and what are you going to do?' He told me of the reception

¹ W. J. Long, *Wilderness Ways*, p. 105, Ginn and Co.

he had met with at his home, and then went on: 'When I think of how mother . . .' and there he stopped; he could not speak for the sobs that choked him. His mother's love had melted the hard spirit in him, and in its place was the feeling that he *could not* grieve her again as he had done, but that he must begin to lead a straight life."

When the repentant sinner is made conscious of the pardoning mercy of God, and when his eyes are opened to see the matchless wonder of the love that has redeemed him and only seeks to make him a better and a happier man, he will not want to take advantage of it. Rather will he feel that *he cannot outrage such love* by sinning against it; all his desire will be to show his gratitude by henceforth doing the will of his divine Saviour and Master.¹

LOVE—ITS SOURCE.

One of the most beneficent works in Nature is the river Nile. For many centuries it has enriched the land of Egypt, thus providing food for millions of the human race. For a long time its source remained unknown. Travellers explored further and further, until Captains Speke and Grant found the great lakes which they named Victoria and Albert Nyanza. But it soon became evident that these lakes were insufficient to supply the river unless they themselves were fed from some source still further back. And then the explorer lifted his eyes to the lofty summits of the Ruwenzori Mountains. There, from the eternal snows, flow the streams that fill the lakes and feed the river. The source of the Nile is from above and not from below.

There is a river whose waters have for centuries been refreshing the lives of men. It has been rightly called "the greatest thing in the world." It is LOVE—whose source springs not from anywhere below in our poor fallen nature. We must lift up our eyes to the everlasting hills. The Source of Love is God Himself, for "God is Love."

THE LOVE OF GOD FOR EVERYONE.

As one of the executors of an old friend, I was present at the reading of his will, when after his funeral his family had assembled to hear it read by the solicitor. All his sons

¹ Sermon broadcast from St. Martin-in-the-Fields, September 9, 1928.

and daughters were there except one, the son who had caused much trouble years before and was then living in a distant colony; his name had been seldom mentioned in the home for a long time past. Their father had made his will only a few weeks before his death, and none of his children knew how he had bequeathed his large property until they heard it now from the lawyer's lips. The will was very brief; and to the manifest surprise and pleasure of all the money was to be equally divided between his six children. Yes; their father had forgiven the prodigal and had shown the same care for him as for the other children, by leaving him an equal inheritance with them. He loved his wandering boy with the same love he felt for the rest.

If the earthly father could do that, may we not believe the Heavenly Father likewise cares for and loves all His children, even those who have wandered far from Him? "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

During the persecution of Decius and Valerian there lived at Nola a priest named Felix. Very little is known about him except what is legendary. One of these legends relates that during the time of persecution he was pursued by soldiers and barely escaped by hiding himself in a cave on the mountain-side. Instantly a spider spun its web across the entrance. The soldiers, seeing the spider's web, assumed that their quarry could not have passed in and so did not enter the cave. When Felix saw they had gone on their way and also perceived the reason for it, he said: "Ubi Deus est, ibi aranea murus: ubi non est, ibi murus aranea"—that is: "Where God is, there a spider's web is a wall: where He is not, a wall is but a spider's web."

PROVIDENCE IN TROUBLE.

A medical friend once told me of an incident in his young days when he was acting as doctor on board a Hudson Bay steamer. The ship became surrounded by ice early in the cold season, and the prospect of escape became almost hopeless, while the stock of provisions could only be made to hold out for a few days longer.

Then appeared a new danger. A huge iceberg, 80 feet high, came grinding its way through the frozen water and seemed to be making straight for the imprisoned ship. Those on board got the grappling-irons ready so that before the ship was crushed they could climb on to the berg and thus prolong their lives for a few hours. Nearer and nearer it came—they watched it with breathless anxiety. But it just missed their ship by a few feet, and in doing so broke the ice and cleared a passage down which the ship followed in the wake of the iceberg until the open sea was reached and safety assured. That which had appeared to threaten their destruction became the means of their deliverance.

Even so, when things are at their worst, the hand of God may be seen, intervening in some unexpected way, turning our foes into friends and causing some dreaded occurrence to be the means of our salvation from evil that we felt or feared.

II

REDEMPTION AND RENEWAL

THE ATONEMENT—TO BE PREACHED.

A thoughtful layman said to his clergyman: "One never hears the doctrine of the Atonement taught now. Why don't you preach about it?" And the answer he received was: "It is too difficult."

Yes; it is difficult to understand fully. But does that warrant any minister of Christ in leaving it out of his preaching? Some of the greatest discoveries in science have been made and their benefits appropriated through patient research and laborious thought. Hundreds of thousands today have found a new interest in life through "wireless"; but who can fully understand or explain the ultimate source of its mystery? That wise and saintly teacher of things divine—the late Bishop Chavasse—said in a sermon: "We must not be afraid to preach the Atonement as Christ and His Apostles preached it. It is not enough to speak of 'the Centrality of the Cross,' and to ignore the Cross as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. As Bishop Butler said: 'Holy Scripture asserts the fact, but never explains it.' And we are not to wait before accepting and proclaiming it, until we have made up our minds which of the eighteen theories of the Atonement is true, or until we can discern a nineteenth which may be better than any of them. But, out of the fulness of our own experience that Christ forgives sin, we must tell, with the accents of conviction, to sinful men around us, that 'Christ has made peace for us by the blood of His Cross.'"¹

CHRIST AND BUDDHA.

In the annals of Buddhism there is a story told of a young mother whose first-born died. In her agony of grief she carried her dead child to a wise man who sent her to

¹ At St. Mary's, Islington, January 10, 1927.

Buddha, as the only one who could give her medicine to restore her boy to life. So she went to Buddha and paid homage to him, beseeching him to give her the restorative her child needed. The sage replied: "Go, bring me a handful of mustard-seed from some home in which no son or parent or husband or slave has ever died." So the young mother went to one house after another. The people said: "You are welcome to our mustard-seed." But when she asked, "Has anyone ever died in this house?" they could only answer: "The dead are many, the living are few." There was not a single house of all she visited where someone had not died. In despair she went back to Buddha and told him. He said to her: "In your grief you thought yourself to be singularly unfortunate and miserable beyond all others. Now you have learned that the law of death is universal, and there is no remedy for restoring the dead to life."

This legend describes the hopeless creed of Buddhism. How different is the hope of the Christian! Very beautiful, and full of inspiring hope, are the three instances recorded in the New Testament of the dead who were raised to life by the Great Son of God—an only son, an only daughter, an only brother.

And He who raised them from the dead was able to say: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (St. John xi. 25, 26).

CHRIST AND THE HUMAN HEART.

There is an old legend told of a baron who possessed a musical instrument unlike any other known in those days. No one had the art of touching the strings so as to make it give forth real music; all such efforts only resulted in producing discord instead of harmony. So it was cast aside as useless, until it became dusty and covered with cobwebs.

One day a stranger came to the castle and found the discarded instrument. He handled it with the care and insight of a master of music and lover of melody. With dexterous touches he cleaned and tuned it, and then, when

his hands swept over the strings, it gave forth such music as had never before been heard within the walls of that castle. Those who listened, spellbound, soon perceived that it was the maker whose magic had so quickly restored the instrument and revealed its latent harmonies.

The legend is a parable. The human heart, like that instrument, is often misunderstood, deemed of little worth, neglected, and so fails to make any response to the ordinary human touch. Then He comes Who knows all about it, and its Maker becomes its Redeemer. To the loving touch of the hand of Jesus it quickly responds, and the heart that was clogged by sin and made sullen by harsh treatment, is set free, in the power of its true life, to render, at His command, harmonious and loving service.

CHRIST AND PLATO.

“Here is one thing that distinguishes Christ from every other teacher—He opens His Kingdom to all. He utterly ignores distinctions of rank and station and culture. No one is shut out of Christ’s Kingdom because he is poor, or ignorant, or of humble station. . . .

“Other teachers have given us their pictures of the ideal state. Perhaps we have the most notable of them in Plato’s Republic. Compare Plato’s picture—the highest product of Greek thinking—with the Kingdom of Christ here described (St. Matt. v. 3-13), and you will see how incomparably nobler and grander is ‘the Kingdom of Christ’ as preached by Christ, than Plato’s Republic. . . . Christ opens His Kingdom to all. Plato can only find room in his Republic for the select few. He has no room in it for the poor man, the ignorant man, the slave. ‘The dyers,’ says Plato, ‘when they want to dye wool for making the true sea-purple, begin by selecting the white colour first.’ And, in the same way, Plato would prepare for his Republic by selecting choice spirits and material to work upon. The refined, the wealthy, the high-cultured—Plato can make use of them; but he can do nothing with the humble and the uneducated and the poor. All these Plato would, so to speak, cast to the rubbish-heap as useless. . . . But Christ opens His Kingdom to all. It is as free to the poor man as to the rich man. He finds room in it for the

men and women whom Plato, and even the Jews, had cast aside as worthless and hopeless. He finds a place for the rejected material of other teachers. There is admission into it for the slave, the outcast, the publican, the sinner.”¹

CHRIST—THE GREAT DISCOVERY.

When men first began to explore the North American Continent, they had to feel their way along the coast in sailing-ships. They would come to a bay, and, thinking it might be the mouth of some great river, they would sail in close until they found their course was blocked. Then they would sail out and on again. One bay after another would, in this way, be explored and marked on their chart. After many disappointments a day would come when they found the way open. As before, they would lower a bucket; and this time when it came up, the water, instead of being salt and brackish, would taste fresh and sweet, and they would know they were in the mouth of a river, perhaps some very great river. Then they would sail up it for hundreds of miles and learn much about the interior of the new continent.

Like those bays along the coast-line of truth are the different cults or forms of new religions today. They promise so much; but on a closer inspection they are found to lead nowhere: they only disappoint the explorer in his search for God. But the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is like the great river: its water is refreshing, and it leads the seeker into the very heart of the continent of Truth.

CHRIST—THE (LIGHT OF THE WORLD.)

The Chief Justice of Ceylon once attended an Easter Eve service at a Greek Church in the island. The majestic symbolism he witnessed made a deep impression on his mind. In describing it afterwards he said: “The church was dark, save for the ikon with its surrounding candles. As each worshipper entered, he was furnished with a small taper. For some time the service proceeded in darkness; but as the evening wore on there were gradual streams of light from the centre of the church, and we soon realised

¹ J. D. Jones, D.D., *The Way into the Kingdom*, p. 18, Religious Tract Society.

what was happening : the worshippers in the centre had lit their tapers and were handing on the lights to their fellows, and thus the Easter Festival was ushered in."

"The whole world lieth in darkness." Jesus Christ came to dispel that darkness. He said of Himself: "I am the Light of the world"; and to His disciples He said: "Ye are the light of the world." We are all endowed by God inwardly with the means of illumination, for "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord" (Prov. xx. 27). As each soul among us receives the personal touch of Christ, the candle is lighted and the man becomes, like John the Baptist, a "burning and a shining light."

CHRIST—HIS POWER TO SAVE AND BLESS.

One of the best-known and best-loved of Browning's poems is "A Death in the Desert." The aged Apostle, St. John, is dying in a cave. His friends have gathered around him. They are sore perplexed by the doubts which have arisen concerning the story of the Cross and the empty tomb of Jesus, and so they seek to revive their master's failing powers, that he may tell them, before he passes away, whether he still holds to the belief that Jesus is the Divine and Eternal Son of the Heavenly Father. The dying man showed no sign of consciousness until one of his friends, a boy, "stung by the splendour of a sudden thought," ran to fetch a plate of lead, on which were engraved some of the teachings of St. John's Gospel. Running his fingers along the dents in the plate, he read the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." At once the dying Apostle opened his eyes wide and sat up and looked at his friends and gave them his testimony. He told them how he had faced all the problems and wrestled with all the doubts by which their minds had been disturbed, but that he remained convinced as ever that this was indeed the Word of Life which his eyes had seen and his hands had handled.

That is the only explanation which can account for the experience of Christians in every age. None but God could do the things which Jesus Christ has done—things which He is still doing every day; lifting up men out of the depths of sin on to the heights of a new life; giving them power

over temptation; comforting the sorrowful; standing with them at the graveside of their loved ones, to inspire them with a sure and certain hope of the Resurrection from the dead. He has been doing these things for countless thousands of men and women all down the centuries.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.

In Plato's Republic that wise philosopher used his gift of imagination to portray the condition of mankind by an allegorical picture. Briefly it is this. The world is like a great cave, with one entrance through which the light may be seen. But all the people are sitting in semi-darkness, because they are at the far end of the cave away from the entrance. On their necks and legs are chains by which they are bound so that they cannot turn round, and they are all placed with their backs to the light. All they have to see by is the glow of a fire that burns dimly above them somewhere in the roof of the cave and causes shadows to flit and flicker on the walls.

Let us take a leaf out of this pagan philosopher's book and compare it with the teaching of the Bible. We are, indeed, by nature "sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Ps. cvii. 10). All that we can learn from the glow of Nature's light are but shadows flickering on the walls of our circumscribed environment. Also "we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins" (cp. Ps. cvii. 10), so that we cannot see the light of God that shines beyond the confines of our limited spiritual horizon.

"Suppose" (Plato goes on to say) "a free man from without the cave were able to come and liberate one of these chained captives and to lead him into the light outside. At first he would be dazed so that he could see nothing clearly. Then gradually, as his eyes became accustomed to the new and bright light, he would discern objects more and more distinctly, and at last he would be able to see the source of light, the Sun himself."

What Plato merely imagined, in the play of his fancy, has actually been accomplished by the grace of God. From the realm of Heaven's own light into the darkness of our earthly cave, through His Incarnation, the Son of God came to visit us. And from the gloom of ignorance and

sin He has taken, not one, but many captives, striking off the chains and fetters of their sinful desires and habits and bringing them into the full light and "glorious liberty of the children of God."

"Suppose, further" (Plato proceeds), "this man, who has been liberated, were to return to the cave; at first, because of its gloom, he would be unable to see even as much as he had seen before. Then the cave-dwellers, looking on him, would commiserate him, and say he had been blinded by the light of the sun outside, and that if anyone were to come and try to take him again into the light, if it were possible for them to get this intruder into their hands, they would kill him." . . . "Would not this man who had once been in the light" (Plato argues), "if he remained in the cave long enough on his return, come to think that the shadows he had been accustomed to see all his life were the real things? And that the realities he had seen outside were but shadows?" And he answers this question by replying: "Yes, he would." In this latter part of Plato's parable there is a warning for "those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift" (Heb. v. 4). It is indeed strange that any man who has been led into the light of the knowledge of God and of heavenly truths should ever want to return to the old life of earthly ambition and gain and pleasure. They who do so quickly learn how unwilling the worldly-minded are to believe in the glorious realities of revealed religion and how true it is that if Jesus Christ were to come in these days, as He did nearly two thousand years ago, the world would reject His message and some would try to kill Him.¹

JESUS—OUR DELIVERER.

One of the most thrilling stories of the sea during recent years was the rescue of the crew of the British tramp steamer *Antinöe* by the United States liner *President Roosevelt* during a severe storm in mid-ocean, in January, 1926. While the work of rescue was being effected, tens of thousands of people on both sides of the Atlantic daily read, with unabated interest, the tidings that came by wireless telegraphy describing the desperate efforts made,

¹ This allegory might be used to illustrate 2 Cor. iv. 3-4.

whereby the ship's company, twenty-five in all, were transferred from the sinking *Antinöe* to the decks of her deliverer. In a full account afterwards given in the columns of *The Times* (February 1, 1926), it was stated that "Evans, the wireless operator of the *Antinöe*, crystallised the feelings of the whole crew, when he said: 'We never supposed for a moment that a first-class passenger-boat like this would come to the rescue of a poor little freighter and give four whole days to the job.'" It was this, more than anything else, perhaps, which appealed to the imagination of the people living on two continents—the great liner altering her course in response to the S.O.S., going under full steam to save the helpless little ship, and standing by for four days until the storm abated sufficiently for the work of rescue to be attempted.

May we not see in this story of human compassion a type or symbol of the infinite pity and love that moved the Son of God to come to our world and to save from our poor sinking humanity all who cry to Him for help and who are waiting to be delivered by Him, and in Him to find perfect safety and rest of conscience and hope eternal?

CONVERSION.

Everybody knows what B.C. and A.D. stand for in the history of the world. There is another way of using these letters—in a personal sense. A modern writer has said that "Christ has given a new Calendar of time to the soul." There are two periods in the lives of Christian people. One covers the time before they knew Christ as their personal Saviour—that is B.C.; the other describes the new life of faith and service which they have enjoyed since their eyes were opened to see Jesus as their Divine Redeemer and Heavenly Master—that is A.D.

The supreme question for everyone to ask himself is, "Have I ever crossed the bridge from the B.C. of my old state, unregenerate by nature? Am I walking in that newness of life which commenced with the A.D. of my conversion to God through Jesus Christ my Lord?"

THE CROSS—ITS INSPIRATION.

A sergeant at the Front was alone in charge of a transport. Suddenly the enemy's shells found him and he wanted to run for shelter. But he saw, through the smoke of battle, a wayside Calvary, the Cross and a Figure nailed to it; and he said: "If He could stick that for me, I am going to stick it for the women and children—and for Him."

Trouble and sorrow, or religious doubts, or anxieties about loved ones, find us all out at one time or another. And then, it may be, a great fear comes over the soul and there is the temptation to give up and escape from the hard duty or the danger that threatens. At such times there is nothing like a sight of the Cross, with a view of the Crucified One. That will steady the nerves and banish cowardice; for, in looking at Jesus, what can one say but this: "If He endured all that for me, surely I can bear this much for my own soul's welfare, or for the sake of others—and for Him"?

GOOD FRIDAY.

The darkest day in the annals of Serbia was June 15, 1389. On that day was fought the battle of Kossovo, when the last Serb Tzar, Lazar, was taken captive and put to death, and the flower of the Serbian army perished on the field. Surely a day to be forgotten, or, if remembered at all, to be observed in sackcloth and ashes! But no; the memory of the battle has been handed down through all succeeding generations, to keep alive in the breasts of the people the spirit of pride and independence, with the hope of ultimate triumph and freedom. The anniversary of Kossovo has ever since been celebrated by the Serb people. Although the descendants of the old Serb race in Montenegro wear mourning on their caps for Kossovo, the peasant bards of Serbia have immortalised the day in a cycle of national songs called "The Lay of Kossovo."

Why should a race thus honour, year by year, the memory of a great disaster whereby it lost its independence for nearly five centuries? The answer given by one of their

historians is that "it contains, with its proofs of national heroism, the promise of redemption."

A tragedy, darker far beyond all comparison, was enacted nearly two thousand years ago. On the day which we commemorate as Good Friday, the Divine Redeemer of our fallen human race was put to death and His followers were scattered in dismay. But ever since then that day has been observed as the most sacred anniversary in the Christian Calendar. And this is so not merely because a deed of heroic self-devotion was wrought to serve as an example and inspiration to those who should come after, but because on that day sin received its death-wound and Death itself was mortally wounded and the glorious Redemption of the human race became an assured fact for all Eternity.

This truth is well expressed in the following incident related by Canon Peter Green: "Nor must we allow ourselves to think of the Crucifixion as if it were a defeat which the triumph of Easter morning put right. Rather we should think of the whole drama of the Passion as the record of a long series of victories. I owe this thought to a young Manchester man, of no more than elementary school education, one of my parish workers, who was speaking for me, on Good Friday afternoon, in the street. He said: 'I don't want you people to think of Good Friday as a sad day. It was a sad day once, and for One. But for us it is a day of solemn triumph. And don't think it was a day of defeat, and then Easter Day came and put things right. No, indeed! Jesus was a Conqueror all along. First He conquered Himself, and His own natural shrinking in the Garden. Then He conquered pain when He prayed, "Father, forgive them," as the nails went through. Then He conquered hard-hearted impenitence in the thief on the cross. And then He conquered all the powers of evil in the Hours of Darkness. Death was only the last enemy that shall be overcome.'"¹

THE INCARNATION.

One of the great events of the nineteenth century was the laying of the first Trans-Atlantic cable. Its completion

¹ Canon Peter Green, *Our Lord and Saviour*, p. 86, Longmans, Green and Co.

produced a tremendous sensation. On August 5, 1858, from the American side rang the message: "Europe and America are united by telegraphic communication. Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men." But in the New Testament the evangelists record an event of infinitely greater importance. The eternal Son of God came to this earth and entered our human nature, being born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem, thus establishing between earth and heaven such a bond of union as had never been before. It was this which inspired the Angel's hymn of praise: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men."

THE LOVE OF CHRIST—ITS INSPIRATION.

When the Rev. J. B. McCullagh first went out to work amongst the Nishga Indians on the Naas River, B.C., he almost lost heart because of the degrading habits of the people with whom he had come to live and teach the Gospel; his soul revolted against their heathenish ways and customs.

One day a feeling of despair seized him; but, like the prophet Elijah, he made his complaint to the Lord. Casting himself on the ground, he cried out: "O Lord, why hast Thou brought me here? These people sicken me with their vile habits. How can I ever win them for Thee unless I learn to love them? And instead of loving them I loathe them." "And then," he adds, "as I remained on my knees in the forest, I seemed to see the Cross of Calvary and the Figure of Jesus there. And I seemed to hear His voice saying to me, 'I loved these people well enough to die for them. Canst thou not love them well enough to live for them?' And in the strength of that vision I arose from my knees with a new feeling in my heart for the Indians; I had begun to love them."¹

RE-CREATION.

One of the masterpieces of ^{Michael Angelo} ~~Michael Angelo~~ is a colossal statue of David, nine cubits in height. There is an interesting story attached to it. A hundred years previously

¹ J. W. W. Moeran, *McCullagh of Aiyansh*, p. 40, Marshall Brothers.

a huge mass of white marble had been brought from the famous Carrara quarries in Northern Italy. A sculptor had attempted the work of carving it, and in so doing blundered badly and left his work unfinished. The block of marble was considered so marred as to be useless, until a century later, when Michael Angelo looked at it and undertook to chisel it afresh, and with amazing skill he fashioned it into shape. The statue represents David going out to meet Goliath with his sling in his hand. The concave hollow left by the bungling sculptor in the side of the block was utilised by Michael Angelo so as to form the curve of the slinger's body as his arm swept round to hurl the smooth stone from the brook at the oncoming giant. So that which had been considered a defect in the ruined marble was made use of by the master-sculptor to complete his design. His famous "David" is one of the glories of Florentine art.

In this we may see a parable of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done and is doing for thousands of human lives, marred by sin and cast aside by others. He can renew the character that has been a failure. His grace is sufficient for everyone who repents and desires to be made "a new creature in Christ Jesus."

VICTORY OVER SIN—HOW TO BE WON.

It is not generally known to the outside world by how narrow a margin Japan won the great Russo-Japanese War in 1902. At one time everything looked black and hopeless. Japan was very near the end of her resources, but the Russians knew it not. In Court and among military and naval men everyone was terribly depressed; the general feeling was that to win the war had now become impossible. Then something happened which instilled new courage and hope into all hearts. It was an edict from the Emperor. It ran somewhat thus: "Everybody is saying that to win the war is impossible. I know how great the difficulties are and how strong are the forces of the enemy. But *of you it is expected to do the impossible.*" The Japanese received the message with a breath of relief. It kindled fresh hope in the hearts of all. "It seems to us impossible," they said, "to win the war; but the Emperor command

us to do the impossible ; so we can and must do it." Henceforth defeat was impossible, victory was certain.

In the warfare between the Church and the world the forces of evil seem so strong that the conquest of sin appears to be impossible and the Christian is tempted to despair. There should be no such word as despair—no talk about the impossibility of reclaiming the world for Christ. He has commanded us to win the war over sin and Satan. Behind the decree of the Emperor of Japan there was only an appeal to loyalty and patriotic sentiment. Behind the command of our King there is real power. "All power," said the Risen Christ, "is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." And again He said : "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

III

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

We call Palestine the Holy Land; in our thoughts we invest it with a peculiar sacredness. But why is it "Holy"? What makes it the shrine of the best thoughts of civilised humanity? Not its mountains or valleys; not its river Jordan; not any of its natural resources or material products. There is one thing only which makes Palestine "the Holy Land": it was the birthplace of Jesus Christ, the cradle of His Incarnation; its streets and country roads were trodden by His feet; there the Son of God preached and taught and performed His miracles; on one of its hills He was put to death; from one of its garden sepulchres He arose from the dead.

Even so is it of the Church. Whether we mean the great human society called the Holy Catholic Church, or the stately cathedral, or the building in which the village people meet to worship God, it is the presence of Christ by His Spirit which invests the Church with the beauty and the glory of true holiness. The land of Palestine would be nothing without Bethlehem and Calvary; and the Church itself would be an empty shell without the presence of the ever-living Christ.

THE CHURCH—A PLEA FOR UNITY AND TOLERATION.

"Three main movements of thought and experience are lodged within our household—catholic, evangelical, liberal; so we call them. Is any one of them an intruder? Does not each stand for a spirit, an aspect of truth without which the Church would be impoverished and its power to answer God's call would be hindered? Then why should they contend with one another? Let each not only tolerate the others but learn from them and give its own witness, so that the fellowship of the one family of God be

not broken or even strained, but made more rich and true. . . .

I am moved to say very solemnly that if, during this time of transition and difficulty, any section or party within the State or the Church were to press its claim to the extreme limit, not only would the unity of the body be imperilled, but the Church would miss for a generation its chance of fulfilling God's purpose, both in England and throughout the world; nay, because His judgments are stern, it might lose its chance for ever."¹

THE CHURCH AND THE MAN IN THE STREET.

An Army chaplain overheard two soldiers talking. "What is the Church?" asked one of them; and the other replied: "It's the place where they put Christianity into cold storage."

It is sad to reflect that such an answer could, with any justification, be given. We know what the Church was intended by our Lord to be—a home to which all may come, who are shivering in the cold outside, and where they may be cheered and warmed by the glow of God's love for them.

THE CHURCH (AND THE WORLD.)

I think it was Martin Luther who once said that Satan devised three great world-influences in succession for counteracting or destroying the influence of the Christian Church.

The first of these was the Power of the world, when pagan Rome sought to crush the early Church by cruel edicts and bitter persecutions under successive Roman Emperors, such as Nero and Caligula.

Having failed by this means, the devil sought to subvert the faith of the Church by employing the Wisdom of the world. From the third to the fifth centuries Neo-Platonism challenged Christianity with its subtle tenets of philosophy.

In each case history records the triumph of the Orthodox Faith.

¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Cosmo Gordon Lang), in a sermon preached at his enthronement in Canterbury Cathedral, December 4, 1928.

The third attempt to subvert the Christian Revelation and to draw away the Church from allegiance to her Lord had yet to be made when the great reformer spoke. It has been reserved for these later times and has been specially conspicuous during the present generation. It is the Goodness of the world; philanthropy without religion; morality without the Cross; kindness and love and generosity apart from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: these are the marks of that spirit of the age which would nullify the redemptive work of Christ, substituting human goodness for the Grace of God by which alone man's heart can be cleansed and sanctified. As in the early days of Christianity the Church overcame the power of the world by enduring persecution and facing death through her faith in the Risen Jesus; and as in later times the hearts of true believers turned away from the unsatisfying doctrines of an impersonal philosophy for rest of soul to the Personal Christ, so in these days let us be loyal in our faith and love to Him from Whom alone true goodness comes and in Whom is found the strength which makes and keeps men truly good.

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

“We all know that the moon causes the tides, that her power of attraction is a real thing, not strong enough to pull over the whole body of the earth, but fully strong enough to pull up the ocean into a great sloping wave, which always stands steadily beneath her, but which (on account of our rotation) seems to us to go sweeping round the globe every twelve and a half hours. This hill of waters is, in the open ocean, not much more than thirty feet high . . . a witness to the perpetual presence and force of the moon. The nature of water is to fall down and never rest until it has attained the lowest place possible; but here is a comparatively small body of water, having the same weight and tendency as the rest, that does not obey the law, but chooses to stand a little above the usual level. Now suppose for a moment that the moon was invisible and always had been so—a change that would easily be effected by a slight permanent thickness of our atmosphere—what would be the result? The tides would

go on exactly as they do today, but it would be hard to account for them. In early days they would have been accepted without enquiry; . . . but, as man's powers of observation and calculation increased, scientific men would discover that the only hypothesis that could satisfy the facts would be found in supposing a great body hanging in the sky and exercising a counter-attraction on the water. Then the size and weight of the moon would be calculated with great exactness, its distance from the earth and all its movements; and nothing would be wanting to our knowledge but its appearance, to which we should have no clue. And from what would this mass of knowledge be derived? From the presence and movement of a belt of water which defies the universal law of earthward gravitation; that and nothing else; a witness on the earth to the existence of some power in the sky, strong but invisible.

"I need hardly translate. Our Lord is represented by the moon, the nations are the ocean, and the Christian Church is the raised belt of water. He is invisible, and so there are some things about Him that cannot be known, but His main characteristics are clear. He is there, a real acting presence, and so powerful that He can draw human hearts away from their natural downward trend of self-interest, and lead them to follow and obey Him up to the heights of heroism. We admit that the hypothesis 'He is alive' is a stupendous one; but find another if you can."¹

CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA.

During the years 1927-28 China was swept by succeeding waves of revolution and civil war. Christianity seemed in danger of destruction, and the hearts of many failed through fear. But there was no need of despair. In a letter I received from a missionary friend in Central China, dated February 3, 1929, she told of a great revival of religion—doors opened everywhere—there were eighty-two baptisms in one church on Christmas Day (1928). The writer added this striking commentary: "As usual, Satan has over-reached himself, and the horror of the Communist régime has prepared the way for Christ."

¹ Constance Maynard, "Is Christ Alive Today?" *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1920.

CHRISTIANITY—ITS INFLUENCE AMONG THE OUTCASTES.

“A village munsiff (magistrate) came to see me when I was in camp and, pointing to the Christians, said: ‘Their grandfathers and fathers lived by plunder. Nothing was safe in the village. But now everything is changed. We can leave our doors open and sleep in peace, for these people have become Christians. Our cattle are safe. It is a good religion.’ ”¹

THE GOSPEL—A NEW POWER IN HEATHEN LANDS.

When Sir William MacGregor was Governor of New Guinea, a distinguished Austrian prince arrived with a recommendation from the Home Government. Sir William took him up-country for some game-shooting. After they had been some hours on the way, the prince said to the Governor: “Sir William, I don’t understand it. Where is your army?” He replied: “I haven’t got one.” “But how do you keep order?” Sir William answered: “The people keep order themselves.” The prince was evidently perplexed to know how such a condition of things could be in New Guinea. After a time he said: “What arrangements are being made about hunting for the next few days?” “Well,” said Sir William, “tomorrow is Saturday, and we can’t hunt on Sunday.” The prince looked surprised, and said: “Why not?” “Well,” was the answer, “the natives won’t go.” “Won’t they go if you ask them?” “They might,” replied Sir William, “if I brought pressure to bear on them; but I certainly won’t do that. However, we’ll ask them what they have in their minds.” So the men were brought up and asked what they wanted to do next day. They replied: “We want to go home.” “What for?” “Why, because the day after is Sunday, and we want to worship.” And so home they went. In describing this incident Sir William added: “I wonder if he saw any connection between two principles, and if he realised that a Sabbath-keeping people does not require an army to keep them in order? The

¹ Letter from the Rev. Y. Muthyalu, C.M.S. Missionary at Kistna, South India.

fact is, we have never had any difficulty in establishing order in the South Seas on the part of the Government. The missionaries have done that for us."

THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH.

In Matthew Arnold's poem, "Revolutions," it is recounted how, very early in man's history, God placed a number of letters in his hand, telling him to make out of them the best word he could.

And man has turned them many times: made Greece,
Rome, England, France—yea, not in vain essayed
Way after way, changes that never cease.
But ah! an inextinguishable sense
Haunts him that he has not made what he should,
Since he has not yet found the word God would.
And Empire after Empire, at their height of sway,
Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,
And drooped and slowly died upon their throne.
"One day," thou sayest, "there will at last appear
The word, the order which God meant should be."

When will that day come? And what is the word that God desires man to make out of the letters which, the allegory suggests, are given into our hands? Some would say: "Empires have failed one after the other, because in them the people have been misgoverned, tyrannised over by that ancient foe of human progress and freedom—Autocracy. Let us make out of the letters God gave us the word 'DEMOCRACY'—Government by the People. Surely that must be the right word." Others would go further still and make the letters spell "Socialism" or "International Communism."

But any one of these would surely fail, because they are, at best, human devices, and there is no security against those national and industrial discords which provoke war and misery. It would not be easy to name any single word which could satisfy the terms of Matthew Arnold's "Revolutions." But the solution is not hard to find. It is enshrined in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." It is fully developed in our Lord's matchless discourse, of which Canon V. F. Storr has written: "Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, set out the Charter of Christian discipleship."

MISSIONS OVERSEAS.

There is an old-fashioned method of catching fish which is still practised by fishermen on some parts of the English coast. It is by means of the seine net. Some three or four men push off from the beach in their crab-boat, taking with them one end of the net; the other end is held by their partners on the shore. When the oarsmen have pulled the boat out to the full extent allowed by the length of the net, they begin to row parallel with the shore, the other men walking along the beach with them. Between them they drag the net for some little distance; then the boat is rowed inshore again; the net is drawn on to the beach and emptied of the fish which have been caught.

This illustrates a primary factor in the principle of missions to the heathen. Out into the distant parts of the world, across the intervening waters, go the "fishers of men," eager to win souls for their Master in lands of pagan darkness. They carry with them one end of the Gospel net; the other is held by their partners—those who remain at home and help them in their work by prayer and gifts. It is all done by co-operation. The missionary must be sent out over the sea; but he cannot maintain himself or carry on his work without the material help of the friends who undertake to support him in the homeland. They hold the shore end of the net; he and they work together, and both alike will rejoice in the great day when they lay their spoils at the Master's feet.

MISSIONS OVERSEAS—SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

Mr. Wilson Cash has told how, when cycling along the desert of the Egyptian Delta, he came upon a man pegging out a claim of land, and who explained how he had bought one thousand acres of desert at $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. an acre. Cheap though it was, it seemed a waste of money to sow or plant anything on this hot, parched desert, where not even a blade of grass was growing. Reading on his face what was passing through Mr. Cash's mind, the man said: "Come back in ten years' time and look at it then!" The incident was forgotten until, about ten years later, Mr. Cash was

① J. W. W. Moeran, *McCullagh of Aiyansh*, p. 149, Marshall Brothers.

again at the same place. To his surprise he found a complete transformation. There was a canal, with a pumping-station from which a great quantity of water was being poured on to the land—an avenue of trees led to a bungalow; all around were vines growing with great bunches of luscious black grapes, and there was the same man standing by the bungalow. "At first," he said, "it did seem hopeless; but now it is bringing me in an income of £1,000 a year."

That is a picture of what missionary enterprise has done in many a heathen and Mohammedan land, fulfilling the prediction of Isaiah that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." At first the task seemed hopeless, the soil of human nature so hard and dry; but the water of Life was brought there, the seed of God's Word was sown in faith and courage and patient hope by the pioneer missionaries, and we know how wonderful the results are in many places.

Alas! for the sequel to Mr. Cash's story! The farmer had succeeded beyond all expectations. He was growing magnificent grapes, and his income was yearly increasing. Then came the Great War. He was the subject of an enemy country, and he had to leave his home and his land. By 1918, when Mr. Cash again passed that way, he saw only a big crop of rank weeds, the vines dead or dying, the land reverting to its old desert-like appearance. A vivid picture this of a Mission-station, where a promising work has to be abandoned because money and recruits to carry on the work are wanting. And this is what is happening all the world over!¹

POSITIONS—HIGH AND LOWLY.

In warfare brilliant actions are sometimes performed by specially selected units, and the waiting Empire behind watches with admiration the valour of her sons in driving the enemy from some stronghold or forward post. The great achievement is described by every newspaper correspondent, and the names of its heroes are on everyone's

¹ W. Wilson Cash, *The Moslem World in Revolution*, chap. viii., Edinburgh House Press.

lips. There are others who deserve an equal share of honour, yet their names are not heard of, their praises remain unsung. They were elsewhere along the line holding the enemy there in check; they had to fight a containing battle, sometimes at great cost to themselves. They fought for others to win. They captured no position, yet without their patient endurance and steady reliance in a difficult spot no advance could have been made by those who get all the *éclat* of success and victory.

Very much the same thing may be said of the Church which is the Army of the Living God on earth. There are those for whom is appointed some prominent position; they are in the main advance—the forward movement for attacking the strongholds of sin. Their names are known as Christian statesmen, philanthropists, pioneer missionaries, bishops, and gifted preachers. And yet they could never accomplish their noble ambitions were it not for those who hold the humbler position of containing the battle-line for them. Their great achievements are only made possible by the prayers of a saintly mother or devoted nurse or the influence of a conscientious schoolmaster or loyal friend, whose places are in the background. These have all combined to mould the character and shape the career of the popular hero, and yet fame never comes to them; but their part in the great concerted movements of Divine Providence will not be forgotten nor go unrewarded by their Father Who seeth in secret.

THE PROMISED PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

Preaching, some years before his death, on the closing words of St. Matthew's Gospel, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," the late Bishop Tucker of Uganda said: "This great promise is conditional; it was made to a living missionary Church, in true fellowship with Christ. In the weariness of travel, in deep longings for home, in the awful solitude of heathenism, it is indeed fulfilled; and from chapter to chapter of life's short story, the child of God who is strong to spread His Kingdom, hears the voice saying, 'I am with you.' Words cannot tell what the Presence of Christ is in the mission field."

UNION AMONG CHRISTIANS.

Between the different savage tribes on the island of Aniwa (New Hebrides) there were constant feuds; they could hardly meet without quarrelling; bloodshed was frequent. Once, when the season for feasting and dancing drew near, Dr. Paton (the missionary) determined to check this, and, if possible, put an end to it. His plan was this: he proposed the building of a church, and called upon the various tribesmen to unite in the work. They responded willingly enough; but none dared come without bringing their weapons with them, for fear of being attacked by the others. However, the work of church-building not only kept them occupied, but also exercised a deterrent influence. No one dared desecrate such toil by quarrelling with his neighbour. One man in particular owed his life to this rule of conduct. He was a troublesome and bad character who had made many enemies for himself. He had been in hiding, but made his appearance after the work had begun. He toiled with a will all day long, for, as he told the missionary, the others would not dare to kill him while he was helping to build the Lord's House. His very enemies admitted his right to such immunity. As the building of the church progressed, interest became deepened, weapons were laid aside, men who had been bitter foes before learned to work together cheerfully and with goodwill. All this has been described in a letter from Mrs. Paton, the missionary's wife.

Does it not read like a parable for us in these times in which we live? The Church of Christ has in the past been rent by divisions, which are not yet healed. All true Christians long and pray for unity. One way at least by which mutual misunderstandings can be broken down is for us all, as much as possible, to unite in building the Temple of God on earth. In many ways this can be done, both in the Homeland and in Overseas Missions. Unity in common service, sanctified by prayer, must help in preparing the way for Reunion.

THE WORLD—RIGHTLY VIEWED.

A man took his son with him to make the ascent of a mountain. On the lower slopes the way led them through pine trees; then higher up there was scrub and heather, and higher still boulders covered with lichen. At last in front of them was the bare, stark peak, forbidding, inviting. When they had climbed this, from its summit they looked back on the way they had come and on the far-stretching landscape beyond. "What a big world it is, and how wonderful!" said the boy. "It was always big and wonderful," replied his father; "but we had to get out of its entanglements and incidents and view it from above, before we could see it as it is."

So long as we live on the level plain of the common earth-life, we cannot see things as they really are. We need to climb the mountain of high resolve, to get our minds clear of the entanglements of ordinary pursuits and selfish interests, and by means of prayer to gain the near presence of God Himself. From that height alone can we see the world as it is, with its opportunities of service and its claims on us, all of them revealing the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of Him who created them for His glory.

THE WORLD—TO BE WON FOR CHRIST.

In the year 1247 a violent irruption of the ocean created the great gulf, sixty miles in length and more than two hundred miles in circumference, known as the Zuyder Zee. The Dutch people have never been reconciled to this loss of their territory, and one of the greatest engineering feats of our day has just finished the first stage in winning back this large area from the sea, somewhere about half a million acres having been reclaimed at a cost of ten millions sterling. When the whole scheme is completed, nearly one and a half million acres will be restored to the kingdom of Holland.

A long time ago our human nature was submerged by sin. Here and there portions have been recovered, but there still remain vast tracts waiting to be reclaimed. Our Lord Jesus Christ died to redeem the whole world, and

has commissioned His Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to win all the nations back to God. It is a glorious enterprise, demanding self-sacrifice on a far greater scale than has yet been shown. The work is beset by difficulties and entails a heavy cost. But if we have faith enough to believe that "with God all things are possible," He will enable His Church to accomplish the fulfilment of His purpose in winning the world for Christ.

IV

FAITH AND WORSHIP

ABIDING REALITIES.

I was standing on the Rigi-Külm, the clouds all round the mountain shutting out the view I had gone up there to see. But before long they rolled away, revealing a wonderful panorama of lakes and mountain peaks and far-stretching plains of level country. Then more clouds came up, quickly blotting them all out. But I said to myself: "I know just what is below, now concealed from view—and if I wait awhile I shall see it all again." And surely once more the clouds rolled away. They might hide from view what I wanted to see; but they could not alter the fact that what I had once seen with clear vision remained there, still the same as ever.

Even so is it with spiritual experience. When you have been privileged to see with the eyes of faith some great spiritual reality, keep this reality firmly in your heart and memory. Clouds of doubt or misgiving may obscure the view and shut out for a time from your sight all that once inspired you with joy and peace. But the reality is there. "Cast not therefore away your confidence."¹

CHRISTMAS.

In the west of Ireland is an old custom which still survives. On Christmas Eve, in every country house, a candle is lighted—the candle being sufficiently long and thick to burn all night; the door of the house is also left open, the object being that in every home there should be a light and a welcome in case the Saviour should return to this earth. The old idea, doubtless, was that if Jesus came again on Christmas Eve He should be lodged in some more worthy place than the manger of a country-inn stable. In this old custom we may see an object-lesson

¹ Heb. x. 35.

of a truth which is of vital importance. Let there be in every home and every heart a welcome, not on Christmas Eve only, but always, for Him who once said: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me."¹

THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE.

Marco Polo (thirteenth century), in writing an account of his travels through Eastern lands, tells of a visit he paid to a village in Persia, where he came across a strange tradition. It was said that from that spot three Kings had once started to worship One who had been born in the West. One of these kings was an old man, one was middle-aged, and the third was a young man. A star led them to the object of their quest. Before starting on their journey they provided themselves with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, intending to offer the newly-born gold if He should prove to be a king, frankincense if He were divine, myrrh if He were a physician. On reaching Bethlehem they decided on paying their respects separately, going in one by one to the stable of the inn. The old man went in first. Instead of finding, as he had expected, an infant, he found an old man who spoke to him, as out of a ripened experience. The middle-aged man went in next, and he found a teacher of about his own age, with whom he held converse. Then the young man entered, and he found himself face to face with a young man who spoke to him as a prophet. These three wise men from the East then discussed the marvel by themselves. There was only one conclusion they could come to. Each of them had found in Him they had seen, a Being who was exactly suited to himself, able to understand him and to sympathise with his best and highest ambitions, to speak words of wisdom and comfort to him according to his needs. Then these three kings all went in together, taking with them the gifts they had brought. They were amazed to find an Infant, lying in a manger as His cradle. To Him they presented their gifts and worshipped Him as their God, their Saviour-King, the divine Healer of sinful, suffering humanity.

¹ Rev. iii. 20.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

“Guard your lines of communication with God—everything that keeps you in touch with Headquarters—your prayers, your Bible reading, your public worship, your Communion at the Holy Table.”¹

THE FOUR GOSPELS.

An artist is asked by the family of a distinguished man to commemorate on canvas the face and character of the father whose life-work has been their pride and joy. He considers how he can best succeed in gratifying their expectations. And then he tells them: “I can never satisfy you,” he says, “if I paint one portrait only. Your father was a great soldier; he is now an honoured statesman; he is also gifted as a man of letters; and those who live near his home respect and love him as an ideal landlord and country gentleman.” So he is commissioned to paint four portraits, in order to do full justice to the man who has adorned so many walks in life. In each of them the face is the same, but the dress or uniform and surroundings are different. Thus the family are enabled to hand down to succeeding generations a complete study in oils of the appearance and character of him whom they wish to honour.

In order to convey to His Church a full and perfect knowledge of our Divine Redeemer, the Holy Spirit has in His wisdom given us four portraits of our Blessed Lord. Far better than one comprehensive biography are the four Gospels. In them we have four distinct pictures of Jesus Christ in His Kingship, His Humanity, His Redemptive work, and His Deity. Each of them is marked by the distinct personality of the writer, while in all alike may be traced the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by Whose direct inspiration the human agency was empowered so as to give the full knowledge we need of the perfect Christ.

PREACHING AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“The other day I heard of a clergyman who was not a great preacher as the world calls preaching, yet God

¹ The late Dr. Bowers, Bishop of Thetford.

gave him many souls. What was the secret of his success? The answer, I think, was given by an old curate of his who said: 'We could always hear him saying softly as he entered the pulpit, "I believe in the Holy Ghost—I believe in the Holy Ghost."'"¹

PREACHING CHRIST.

On the title-page of a volume of Father Stanton's sermons, published shortly after his death, were inscribed the words which expressed his own ideal and constant endeavour: "This is what I should like to be said of me when I am dead and gone the way of all flesh, 'He preached Jesus.'" L

PREACHING—GETTING THE RANGE.

Mr. Frederick Palmer, the American War Correspondent, paid a visit to the Grand Fleet in the late summer of 1915. He was much impressed by an expression which he heard used repeatedly; he called it "a great phrase." An officer was describing the result of a successful action, and added by way of explanation, "We had the range of them." After the battle of the Falkland Islands, Mr. Palmer was told how our British sailors saved as many as they could of the Germans who floated when von Spee's squadron had been sunk. And when the dripping officers set foot on the deck of the *Inflexible* the British explained their own victory by saying, "We had the range of you." It all seemed to depend on this. Any amount of shot and shell might be fired; but so long as it fell short, or wide of the mark, or even near, without hitting, it was so much waste of powder and metal. The great thing was to find the range and then to keep on driving the shots home.

It is the same thing with preaching. The sermon is a failure unless the preacher "gets the range" of his listeners. Mere platitudes fall wide of the mark. But when the truth is boldly declared and the Saviour's love and power proclaimed in the strength of a great faith and with the fervour of spiritual sympathy, then the shots will go home and the sinner will haul down his flag and make the great surrender.

¹ The late Dr. Watts-Ditchfield, Bishop of Chelmsford.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF GOD.

When, in 1922, after the Fascist revolution, Benito Mussolini assumed the reins of government, he found the official religion of Italy was dead. There was no recognition of God in Parliament. In his autobiography he wrote: "In the Italian Parliament the name of God had been banned for a long time. Not even the popular party—the so-called Catholic party—had ever thought of speaking of God. In Italy a political man did not even turn his thought towards God. And even if he had ever thought of doing so, political opportunism and cowardice would have prevented him." Mussolini made the daring innovation. "I concluded my first speech in Parliament," he said, "by invoking the assistance of God in my difficult task."

What was the result? He himself tells us: "A faith openly professed is a sign of strength. I have seen the religious spirit bloom again. Churches once more are crowded, and the ministers of God are themselves surrounded by new respect."

PERSONAL RELIGION.

Speaking in ~~the Queen's Hall~~, London, at the Tercenary Commemoration of John Bunyan (November 23, 1928), the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Cosmo Gordon Lang) said: "Some people disparage the religion of the *Pilgrim's Progress* as a self-regarding religion. I think that the lesson Bunyan teaches is precisely that fundamental truth which we need to learn more than any other today; for the real meaning of all religion is the solitary pilgrimage of the immortal spirit to God. There are burdens which cannot be shifted by any legislation; there is a bitterness which no material conditions can assuage in the slightest degree. We must have the courage to remember that, after all, there remains this solitary quest of the human spirit towards its God. For every man the only true picture of the Christian life is this: 'I am a man who comes from the City of Destruction and who is going to Mount Zion. The question that matters most is: How am I faring on that journey?'"

READING THE CHURCH SERVICES.

In one of the large parish churches in the country a Men's Service was regularly conducted by one of the staff. It was very popular, and its success was largely due to the efforts of the lay secretary, who was an out-and-out Christian. This man suffered cruelly from chalk-gout; but whenever he could get about, he visited the members, making it his great interest and purpose in life to keep them together. One day he told the story of his conversion to his leader from whom I received it: "Years ago," he said, "when I was a young man I lived a thoroughly dissolute life. I was a fish-salesman, and, like many another of my trade, I used to swear and drink heavily. I had no thought of religion. Then one of my relatives died, and it was the way in which the officiating clergyman read the Burial Service that brought about my conversion."

Perhaps that clergyman never knew the result of his reading. Of one thing we may be sure: there was in it spiritual power as well as sympathy. If only those who conduct our Church Services would put their whole soul into their reading and, after prayer and preparation, give of their very best, unknown to them, it may be, God the Holy Spirit would work a miracle of grace in many a heart.

V

CHARACTER AND SERVICE

A SANCTIFIED AMBITION.

A singer told the story of how all had been changed for her. She had sung only for ambition, because she hoped to gather fame and wealth. But one Sunday she went to sing in a prison. Among the convicts was one with strangely sad and hungry eyes. "I sang to that one man," the singer said, "and as I sang a power that was never mine before was given me. The tears rained down the man's cheeks as he listened. Faces all about him began to soften." It was a holy moment for the singer. She had risen out of mere professionalism, and her soul had been touched and thrilled by the love of Christ. From that day all was new for her.

A BROTHER'S VOICE.

A company of men was on a forced march, racing against time, to reach a bridge. One of the N.C.O.'s became utterly exhausted; his mouth was parched with thirst; he felt he must fall out of the ranks, which would probably have meant capture by the enemy. Suddenly he heard himself called by name. He recognised the voice as that of his brother, who was mounted, and had come up from behind as one of the supply-column. A drink from his water-bottle and a cheery encouraging word put new life into the tired man, and he felt able to go forward again.

A brother's voice! That is what so many are needing today, as always. The word of sympathy and the offer of help will often save a man from falling when all things seem against him, and heart and flesh are beginning to fail. Some of us need to learn how to look on the people with broken lives and fading hopes; not as though we are superior to them, but rather as their brothers in the human family,

knowing that God is their Father as well as ours, Jesus Christ Himself being our elder Brother.

Many a man would rise out of his dark despair,
If there were only one, just to believe and care;
Out on the losing side, daring to take his stand,
Heedless of what men say, holding a brother's hand.

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION.

Coleridge had a friend named Thelwall, who wished to bring forward a theory that he did not think it was fair to influence the minds of children until they came to years of discretion, when they should decide for themselves.

"So one day," said Coleridge, "I took him into a certain part of my garden, and I said to him, 'This is my botanical garden.' 'How so?' he asked; it is overgrown with weeds.' 'Oh, yes, I know that,' said I, 'but then, you see, the garden has not yet come to years of discretion, and these weeds have taken the liberty of growing, and I thought it was not fair to prejudice the soil by the cultivation of potatoes, or roses and strawberries.'"

CHRIST—AND YOUTH.

At the Church Congress of 1924 a paper was read by Mr. H. Verrier Elwin, an undergraduate of Merton College, Oxford, in which he said that he had put to many people this question: "What does youth ask of the Church?" "I found," he said, "a whole row of sounding words set up in reply—Adventure, Sincerity, Reality, Truth. But there was one, an undergraduate, who said, 'Just one thing, Jesus Christ.' And I think that behind all the other answers to my question there was that one thing, Jesus Christ; for the elements of which His Spirit is composed are the ideals of youth—Adventure, the Way; Reality, the Truth; Worship and Service and Brotherhood, the Life. For Jesus Christ was young, and Youth half suspects that the Church of its love is old, worn, and furrowed by the passing of years and the controversies which have aged it. . . . Jesus Christ is the ever-young, and is still mighty to challenge Youth to Service and Sacrifice."

CHRIST—REPRESENTED BY THE TRUE CHRISTIAN.

A missionary was preaching in the vernacular to a crowd of villagers in India. He was describing in simple and beautiful language the life and character of our Lord, dwelling on His love and tender compassion for suffering humanity. Among his listeners was a man who said: "We know Him; He lives at Trinity College. When I went there to have my eyes healed, and the rain poured down, He took off His European coat and made me put it on and go home warm and glad." And the others all chimed in: "It is true, we too saw Him there."

They were thinking of that saintly character, Norman P. Campbell, of Trinity College, Kandy, whose beautiful life was spent in healing the sick and teaching all who knew him about the Saviour and Master in Whose steps he daily walked. He died in 1917.

THE CHRISTIAN—TEMPTED.

The most sincere and devout Christian souls are sometimes assailed by doubts and temptations which leave behind the terrible misgiving as to whether they truly belong to Christ. There is a story or legend concerning Catherine of Siena, a saintly woman of the fourteenth century. At one time she spent three days in solitary communion with God, praying for more realisation and joy of the Divine presence. But alas! she was assailed, as never before, by evil spirits, suggesting blasphemous and unholy thoughts. At length a light shone through the gloom of her surroundings; the demon fled and the Lord Jesus appeared and spoke to her. "Lord, where wert Thou," she asked, "when my heart was so tormented by evil thoughts?" "I was in thy heart," He replied. "I believe Thy word, Lord," she said, "for Thou canst speak only what is true; but how can I believe Thou wast in my heart when it was full of horrible thoughts?" "Did those evil thoughts give thee pleasure or pain?" He asked. "They caused me unspeakable pain and misery," was her answer. And the Lord said to her: "Thine anguish of spirit was there just because I was there too; it was My presence in thine heart which made the evil thoughts so

hateful to thee. Thou wast only being tried and tested ; and when the time of probation was over, I caused My light to shine upon thee, and the evil spirits fled because they cannot abide in that light."

CHRISTIAN KINDNESS AND COURTESY.

Sir Bartle Frere¹ was going by train to some place where he was to be the guest of a stranger. This gentleman, who had never seen him, said to a mutual friend : " I am to have the privilege of acting as host to Sir Bartle Frere ; I am going to the railway station to meet him. How can I identify him ? " This was the answer he received : " Look out for a tall gentleman, *helping somebody*—that will be Sir Bartle Frere."

What a beautiful way of describing anyone ! Should it not be the way by which every Christian may be identified ?

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE—OUTWARD AND UNSEEN.

Some of you can remember, during a holiday at the seaside, going out one day in a boat, when you saw something floating on the surface of the water, yellow in colour, shining like gold in the summer sunlight. It was a spray of seaweed. You laid hold of it, thinking to carry it away as a trophy of the sea ; but it resisted all your efforts. The harder you tugged, the stronger it seemed to pull against you, until you had to let go. And why was this ? Because it went deep down, far out of your sight, to the hidden rock from which it grew up and to which it clung with all the tenacity of its plant-life.

In this we may see a picture of the Christian life in its reality and fulness. Outwardly it is visible to all, beautiful because shining with the reflected light of the love of God. But, beneath the surface, far away out of sight, in the silent depths of those realities which are divine and eternal, it is anchored to the Rock—even Jesus Christ Himself. To be united to Him by a living faith—this alone can impart the strength needed for resisting the under-currents of unbelief and temptations ; this alone can keep

¹ Governor of the Cape and High Commissioner in South Africa, 1877-80.

the soul from drifting on the waves of life's troubled sea ; this alone can make the outward life strong and beautiful in the eyes of the world.

CONFESSING CHRIST.

In one of our British submarines which was lost during the war was a young lieutenant, aged twenty-four. His former commander, who had only just previously exchanged from his command of the boat, wrote a letter to this lieutenant's father after his death, which I had the privilege of seeing. After speaking of their two years' happy comradeship, and the courage, trustworthiness, and other qualities he had observed in his young officer, the commander went on to say : " Religion meant a very great deal to him. There is no privacy in a submarine boat ; but I never knew Harold miss his morning and evening prayers, even when it was very rough and he not feeling very well. His splendid example and clean straight life made a great difference to all who associated with him."

EDUCATION—ON CHRISTIAN LINES.

" At Kashmir there is a wonderful school belonging to the Church Missionary Society, run by the Rev. C. E. Tyndale-Biscoe. When he first went to Kashmir he found no high sense of honour, duty, or truth among the people ; also they were very dirty and would not bathe. He said to himself, ' I will try and stop this.' So he opened a school for boys and gathered round him high-caste and low-caste boys. In a few years he had hundreds of students in the school. He made them bathe and taught them to swim until they could swim across the lake four and a half miles wide. These boys have saved many lives every year from drowning on the lake. When cholera breaks out and everyone who can runs away through fear, Tyndale-Biscoe's boys remain, helping to nurse the sick and carry the dead to their burial. Wherever you go in Kashmir and find a straight, honest man, you may know he is a T.-B. boy. Of all the work done here, including beautiful embroidery and articles of gold and silver, the work done by Mr. Tyndale-Biscoe is the most beautiful, because he is making men out of mud. He is not ashamed to teach

them Christianity; and although the State knows that, it gives him a yearly grant, and the ruling chiefs ask him for masters from the school, because they know they will put character into their boys.”¹

EXAMPLE—ITS INSPIRING EFFECT.

There was a man living near Bristol, in view of George Müller's Orphanages, which were built and maintained by him solely by money sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Whenever this man felt doubts about God's care and love creeping into his heart during the hours of darkness, he used to get up and look through the night at the many windows lighted on Ashley Down. They seemed to him like stars of hope and promise shining through the gloom, assuring him that God loves to hear and answer the believing prayers of His children.

PRAYER AND EFFORT.

Lord, teach us this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.—ANON.

“I never understood the value of prayer until my mother suggested to my brothers and me that we should think of our worst sin and ask God to help us to conquer it. We had a week to decide on what that sin was. I thought over my misdeeds, and came to the conclusion that failing to get out of my bath when requested to do so by my nurse was what was ruining my young life. Therefore as a sort of postscript to my other prayers I added the words: ‘And please God help me to get out of my bath quickly.’ I realised that it was up to me to help God, so from that moment, directly my nurse said, ‘Out you come,’ I sprang out as if I had been scalded. I believe that now we are grown up we could get rid of our other sins just as easily. Unfortunately we say, ‘God, help me to get out of my bath,’ and then lie back in the water and expect Him to lift us out without making any effort ourselves. . . .

“‘Prayer is no good to me,’ said a great friend the other day. ‘I pray to be moral. When temptation comes I fall

¹ R. K. Sorabji, Professor of Law at Allahabad University, in a lecture given at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, June 16, 1922.

as easily as ever.' I said: 'Now be perfectly frank. When you pray to be moral, do you mean that you never want to be immoral again?' He hesitated before replying, and then said: 'That's a pretty tall order.'

"We say in the Lord's Prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation,' but we make no effort to keep out of temptation's way. It is frequently the reverse. We deliberately go where we know temptation is awaiting us, and when we fall we are inclined to blame God for putting temptation in our path."¹

PRAYER—THE BEST ANTIDOTE FOR ANXIETY.

The first Earl Cairns, who became Lord Chancellor and leader of the Conservatives in the Upper House, was noted for the calm way in which he bore the burdens of State. Worries and anxieties seemed always to sit lightly upon him, and men sometimes wondered why he was so little moved or disturbed by them. He entered the Council Chamber one day after his friends had been discussing him. One of them asked him what was the secret of it all, hardly expecting, perhaps, to be taken seriously. Lord Cairns answered quite frankly and simply: "Every morning I lay before God, as my Heavenly Father, the plans and cares I have in my mind. I ask Him for His help and guidance, and there I leave them. Having done so, why should I be anxious or worry about anything?"

KING GEORGE AND PRAYER.

"It is well known that the King is a believer in the power of prayer, but it is not known that after the Armistice the King, in the course of conversation, acknowledged this belief, and mentioned that every night throughout the war he had prayed for his people, remembering especially those who accompanied with death.

"Every night those prayers were offered, and once, when a bomb exploded in the immediate vicinity, the King quietly remained on his knees and continued his prayers. How many of his subjects could say the same?"²

¹ Geoffrey Gilbey, "Is Prayer Answered?" *the Daily Express*, November 15, 1928.

² The Rev. E. L. Macassey, *Daily Express*, December 13, 1928.

PRAYER MUST NOT BE HURRIED.

There is an old saying : "Hurry is the death of prayer." May we not see here the reason why we have so often failed in prayer ? "Scientists often spend years, sometimes a whole life-time, in making an important scientific discovery. Then can we expect to discover spiritual beauties by spending only five minutes every day in quiet and prayer ?"¹

THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

"With the prayer of faith we can do anything. St. Mark xi. 24, 'Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them,' saved me from madness in my twelve months' sorrows ; and it is so simple and so wide—wide as eternity, simple as light, true as God Himself."²

THE ETERNAL CHOICE.

Early in August, 1914, an English liner steamed up the St. Lawrence River. The news that war had broken out was first conveyed to those on board by the bands and cheering with which their arrival at Quebec was greeted. Among the passengers was a young man who had just started on a great world-tour, every detail of which had been carefully arranged for months before. Life was opening out for him with golden promises of great things. Endowed with mental gifts and a forceful character, he had become prefect and head of his house at Winchester, and afterwards President of the Union at Oxford. His personal friendships and family connections would also have helped to make his future career a certain success. But, within six hours of landing at Quebec, Gilbert Talbot had taken his passage on the first homeward-bound steamer and was on his way back to England. He had bravely accepted the new problem which had so unexpectedly confronted him, and without hesitation he had made the great renunciation. Putting aside all the alluring prospects of his old plans and ambitions, he responded at once to the call of duty, giving up everything for country, honour, and freedom. After the necessary course of training in a Rifle

¹ Sadhu Sundar Singh.

² Charles Kingsley.

Brigade he went out to France and, when leading his platoon into action at Hooze, was mortally wounded by a bullet and died with a smile on his lips.

Was his life thrown away? When we think of it and all the young lives sacrificed at that time, we are tempted to exclaim: "What a waste of noble lives! What might they not have done for their country and their age, had they lived to fulfil their bright ambitions!" But, if it be asked, "Was Gilbert Talbot's life wasted?" let Toc H be the answer. His life, sacrificed for others, was the inspiration of that great Brotherhood throughout the British Empire, whereby today thousands of young men are banded together, with a common ambition—the joy of serving others, of living unselfishly and making any sacrifice for the good of their fellow-men.

FORBEARANCE—ITS POWER TO INFLUENCE.

From one of the wilder islands of the Melanesian Mission a boy was brought to Norfolk Island. He was very difficult to manage, being of a stubborn and rebellious nature. One day as he had refused to obey some order, Mr. (afterwards Bishop) John Selwyn spoke to him seriously. The lad flew into a passion and struck him on the face. Mr. Selwyn said nothing, but turned and walked away. The boy was punished for his offence; but, as he continued to be very unsatisfactory, he was sent back to his own island, where he soon relapsed into heathen ways. Many years afterwards the missionary who worked on that island was sent for to visit a sick man who had expressed a strong desire to see him. He went and found this very individual in a dying state and begging to be baptised. The teaching he had received had not been in vain; and when, at his baptism, he was asked how he wished to be named, he said: "Call me John Selwyn, because on that day when I struck him he taught me what Jesus Christ is like."

FORGIVENESS.

"In one of his books the late President Hyde wrote of a physician whom he knew in our American Andover. As a youth, Hyde sought this physician's counsel again and again, and grew to look upon him as a master. The

physician had a wild son who, one morning, was found dead upon a railway track. Apparently he had been killed by an oncoming engine. The doctor, being a scientific man, did not take appearances for facts, and examined his son's body. On the throat he found marks of hard-pressed fingers. He then knew that the boy had been strangled, and that the body had been thrown upon the track to hide the crime. A day or two later he met on the street a man whom he looked through and through. That night the man, knowing that he was discovered, came to the doctor's office. He began to confess. The doctor stopped him. 'I know all about it,' he said; 'you needn't say another word.' 'Then,' said the wretched man, 'what are you going to do about it?' 'Only one thing,' answered the doctor; 'I ask you to promise me that for the rest of your life you will say every day, from your heart, the Lord's Prayer.' The man was amazed. He went out of the doctor's office that night a redeemed, because a forgiven, man.

"Now that is human forgiveness. It may seem to you wonderful, but it is a fact. Whence does it come? Certainly it is not the gradual evolution of an earthly quality. It is so lofty that I can imagine no source for it short of the very heart of God. It is a ray from the central fire. If this be true, then we take the very highest example of human forgiveness, wherever we may find it, and say that God's forgiveness exceeds that by infinite reaches. God, we say, must always exceed the most loving in His creatures. So, through the contemplation of the heights of human forgiveness, we gaze beyond upon the ineffable summit of God's forgiveness."¹

HEROES IN HUMBLE LIFE.

When H.M.S. *Formidable* was sinking (having been mined or torpedoed in the English Channel), a sailor, who had won by ballot a place in the boats, turned to another man, saying, "You have parents and I haven't; take my place."

Commenting on this, *The Times* wrote: "The Plutarch of the future will not look for his subjects alone among

¹ From a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on July 8, 1928, by the Bishop of Massachusetts.

illustrious men and conquerors; he will find heroic lives that are lived on less than a pound a week."

LIFE AND HUMBLE SERVICE.

In the obituary column of *The Times* of August 8, 1928, was announced the death of James Carmichael, who died "after a very full and happy life, aged 44"; and then followed a quotation—"He lit many fires in cold rooms." What an epitaph for anyone to deserve! Cannot we all become worthy of such a one?

We may not be able to do anything great or conspicuous in life, such as building a stately castle or cathedral. But all around us are homes with cold rooms in them, people whose hearts are frost-bound by fear or sorrow, needing the warmth of sympathy and renewed courage and revived hopes. Let us learn from our Lord how to cultivate and use the gift of loving service and kindly sympathy. That is the real secret of making life full and happy. Blessed is anyone of whom it can afterwards be recorded, "He lit many fires in cold rooms."

LITTLE BUT GOOD.

Two children were playing one day with buckets on the sands; one had a big bucket, the other a small one. "Your bucket don't hold nothing," said the owner of the larger vessel with great contempt. "P'raps it don't hold much," was the quick reply; "but it can overflow lots."

Our opportunities in life may be circumscribed, our minds of limited capacity. Clever people may despise us; but we can make the most of what we are; we can use our small endowments to their utmost; we can "overflow lots" in daily acts of unselfishness and loving thought and sympathy.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH.

At a banquet given by the Dominion Government in Ottawa, in August, 1927, the Prince of Wales made a speech in which he emphasised the value of always keeping fresh those contacts he had been able to make with all parts of the British Empire. "If there is one lesson," he said, "which, more than another, has been learned in these post-war years, it is the immense value of personal man-

to-man intercourse." That sentence contains one great secret of the Prince's popularity. It is *the personal touch*.

* * * * *

Some one went into a jeweller's shop. Among other stones, he was shown an opal. It lay there, on the counter, dull and wanting in lustre, until the jeweller took it in his hand and held it there for a few minutes, and then showed it again to his customer—now it gleamed and flashed with the colours of the rainbow. It needed the touch and warmth of a human hand to bring out its hidden beauty.

All around us are human lives, dull and downtrodden, yet rich in their possibilities of goodness and usefulness. Let us be, as it were, the hands of Christ stretched out to grasp and hold them until they learn how to shine with the light of a new gladness, a restored faith and a hope that will not fade: and all this because of the personal touch of a living, loving sympathy.

REMEMBER——

A missionary in the South Sea Islands had been preaching. After his sermon was ended, a native Christian prayed in these words: "Grant, O Lord, that the good words to which we have listened may be not like unto the beautiful Sunday clothes which we lay aside speedily and put away until the next Lord's Day; but let those truths be like unto the tattoo marks upon our bodies, which cannot be removed while we live."

RENUNCIATION.

When it became known to his family that Sadhu Sundar Singh (the Indian Christian mystic) had decided for Christ, every effort was made to persuade him not to renounce the religion of his fathers. He was urged to remember the high estate to which he was born; visions of wealth and honour were spread before him. One day his uncle, a man of high position and great wealth, took him down to a cellar under his house. Closing the door behind them, he unlocked a large safe, and there showed the boy his hidden riches, including rolls of money and priceless jewels. Taking his puggaree from his own head, he laid it at Sundar's feet,

and standing bareheaded before him in the attitude of a suppliant, he said : " All these shall be yours if you will not disgrace us by becoming a Christian." Sundar felt this temptation keenly, and he was deeply moved by all his uncle said and promised to do for him ; but, as he stood there, another vision arose before his eyes : he thought of the Saviour Who had died for him, and his resolution remained firm. He refused the offer and put away the temptation. Soon after this he was cursed by his father, disowned by his family, and cast out into the world, homeless, friendless, and destitute.

SAVED TO SERVE.

On that wonderful Monday, November 11, 1918, when Germany signed the Armistice, the news was brought to a British aerodrome in France, where the men were waiting for orders. One of the pilots stood up and said : " Look here, you fellows ; we have been spared to see this day, while so many others have died for the Old Country. Surely we've been kept alive because there's some work for us to do in the world. Let's look out for it, whatever it is, and do it."

Most of us can recall some experience when danger came very near. It may have been an accident or an epidemic. We saw others falling around us, but we escaped. What return have we tried to make for God's mercy in sparing our lives ? We are here today because He has some work in the world for us to do. Are we doing it ?

SEEKING AND SAVING THE LOST.

On the sea-front at Penzance is a lapidary's shop. In its front window are displayed a great number of beautiful pebbles, cut and polished, including crystals and amber, the agate and onyx stones, amethysts and cornelians ; many of them being set in silver as brooches, bracelets, rings, etc. Inside on the counter and in glass cases may be seen many more. One day I entered the shop and got talking with the manageress. I asked her : " Where did all these beautiful stones come from ?" She replied : " Except for a few, sent here from foreign lands and shown as curios, they were all picked up on the beach, close by here or on

other parts of the Cornish coast. In their rough state they look to the inexperienced eye just like common flints and other stones with which the shore is strewn." "Who found them and brought them in to you?" I asked. "Well," she answered, "there are some people who love hunting for them; they become experts at finding them. I know some who have developed quite a passion for doing this. Day after day they go after them; whenever they find a really fine pebble they bring it to us in triumph, and then we have the stones cut and polished until the hidden beauty of their colour is revealed."

On the seashore of humanity, scattered here and there among the rocks and stones of common folk, sometimes in the slums and courts of cities and big towns, souls of rare value lie unnoticed by the ordinary passer-by. And there they might continue to lie, covered daily by the flowing and ebbing tides of chance and circumstance, if it were not for some, more happily placed than they are, in whose hearts burns the holy passion of a consecrated love for these neglected, uncared-for "waifs and strays."

From the great "Lover of souls" they have learned the secret and the joy of seeking and finding the lost, and having found them, they bring them to the Divine Lapidary and leave them with Him. He knows how to cut and polish them until they become transformed characters, shining with the radiant beauty of Christ-like lives, to be reckoned among those of whom we read: "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up My jewels."¹

SELF-KNOWLEDGE—AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

"The man I know myself to be is by no means the same as that seen by the outside world, or even that seen by my closest friend."²

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Cosmo Gordon Lang, after his enthronement in Canterbury Cathedral,³ began his address from the pulpit in these words: "You have seen the ninety-fifth Archbishop of Canterbury placed with stately ceremony on his seat of rule. The man himself, with his own memories and hopes, his own sins and fears, you have not seen. Nor have you heard his inner cry for Divine mercy and help."

¹ Mal. iii. 7.

² James Stalker, D.D.

³ December 4, 1928.

VI

DEATH AND HEREAFTER

ATHEISM AND DEATH.

Marie Corelli overheard a woman, whom she described as "one of the lady leaders of smart Society," say: "I hate people who believe in God, don't you? The idea of God makes me sick." This suggested a leading character in *The Sorrows of Satan*, a woman named Sibyl, who had thrown off all pretence of religion when young and ended her life by committing suicide. After having drunk the fatal dose of poison, while still on the confines of the two worlds, she became vividly conscious of the life beyond with its terrible awakening for her. She is made to write a long confession, called her "dying speech," in which she said: "I live! To my despair and terror, to my remorse and agony, I live! Oh! the unspeakable misery of this new life! And, worst of all, God Whom I doubted, God Whom I was taught to deny, this wronged, blasphemed, and outraged God EXISTS! And I could have found Him, had I chosen. This knowledge is forced upon me as I am torn from hence; it is shouted at me by a thousand wailing voices! . . . too late . . . too late."

A MISERABLE DEATHBED.

One of the outstanding figures of the seventeenth century was Jules Mazarin, Cardinal and Minister of France. During his life he amassed great wealth, acquired power, and wielded immense influence.

When the end of it all drew near, he arose one day from his sick bed; with painful steps he shuffled along to his picture-gallery and took a last look at his collection of famous masterpieces. Someone who happened to be in the gallery heard the sound of feeble footsteps. Hiding behind a curtain, so as not to be observed, he saw the Cardinal stand in front of one painting after another, and

heard him exclaim, "Ah ! that Titian ! that matchless Correggio !" and then he sighed : " Must I leave all these ?" and tottered back to his couch to die.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

A Christian man was brought very low by a dangerous illness ; death had almost succeeded in grasping him. From the Borderland he was brought back to strength and health. During his convalescence a friend said to him : " You have indeed been through the valley of darkening shadows ; was it not very dreadful to feel death so near ?" " No, indeed," was the answer ; " I can never feel thankful enough for the experience I have had. When death seemed almost certain and all hope of recovery was abandoned, I had such a revelation of my Saviour's presence that no room was left in my heart for fear. I feel now that I shall not dread death when it does actually come. It was well worth the suffering I endured, to experience the joy and peace that were given to me then."

DEATH NEED NOT BE FEARED.

During the closing years of his life, Dr. Samuel Johnson was haunted by the fear of death. It became an obsession with him, a cold shadow darkening his pathway continually. In recording this, his biographer, James Boswell, wrote in his diary : " The horror of death which I had always observed in Dr. Johnson appeared strong tonight."

Many besides him, even true Christian people, are haunted by the same dread spectre. And yet, when the end really comes and they have to pass through " the valley of the shadow of death," they learn how little there ever was to fear.

In the early days of Church history, a Christian man was condemned to death, his enemies adopting the cruel method of breaking him on the wheel. Two blows had been struck, when he was seen to smile. Someone, standing by, asked him why he smiled. " Because," he answered faintly, " I had been dreading this so much, and now that it has come I hardly feel the pain at all."

It may be said that his case was exceptional. True, but it may help us to believe that, when our time comes, we

shall have the needful strength and courage given us to face "the last enemy."

THE GLORY OF THE WORLD FADETH AWAY.

Up to the present day when a Pope is crowned in Rome, the master of the ceremonies carries a lighted wax taper in one hand and a reed surmounted by a handful of flax in the other. The flax is lighted; for a moment it flashes and then dies away, and as the thin ashes fall at the Pontiff's feet, the chaplain chants in a full and sonorous voice: "Pater sancte, sic transit gloria mundi."

HEAVEN—OUR HOME.

The original home of the swan is in the far North. At the spring of the year, by a natural instinct, the wild swans in England, and in countries still more southerly, wing their flight to the confines of the Arctic regions, where they nest during the summer months. This annual passion for the North is occasionally shared by our tame swans; but, having been domesticated in this country for centuries, they have become attached to the easy life of their familiar waters. Sometimes, however, the natural instinct will assert itself. When a spring day of sunshine and west wind follows a long spell of wintry weather, the strange spectacle may now and then be observed of a pair of swans rising on their great white wings and with outstretched necks heading for the North. The impulse seldom carries them beyond some other piece of water a few miles away from their old haunts, to which they soon return or else make another home on the new spot.

There is in the hearts of all men an instinct for the far country we call Heaven. It is divinely implanted in our human nature. With some this instinct becomes the passion of a noble purpose—the intense longing for God and holiness and Heaven—which must be fully satisfied. They who become thus possessed by the heavenly instinct turn their faces towards the land of hope and promise. Their life becomes one of constant progress in the knowledge and love of Him Who inspired them with this hope.

Others never get beyond the transitory impulse of this God-given intuition. Under the pressure of some passing

emotion or appeal to their higher instincts, they yield for a time to the desire for God and Heaven, and then settle down to a permanent life of selfish ease and worldly enjoyment.

HEAVENLY MANSIONS.

There is a story told of a rich lady who dreamed that she went to Heaven and was shown some of its wonderful sights by an angel-guide. Presently she saw, rising before her, a noble mansion in the process of being built. "For whom is that beautiful place being built?" she asked of her guide.

"For your gardener," was the answer.

"But," she said, "he is never used to anything more than a small cottage; he would not know what to do in a great house like that. I know," she added, "he is a very excellent man, always doing a good turn to his neighbours; indeed, I sometimes think he gives away more than he ought, with his family to be provided for."

Further on she saw a tiny cottage, also being built.

"And for whom is that little place intended?" she asked. And she was indeed taken aback by the answer she received to this question: "That is meant for you."

"Oh," she exclaimed in dismay, "I have always lived in a very fine house on earth. I should hardly know how to get inside that little box of a place. Can nothing better be found for me?"

And the reply she received was: "The Master Builder is making the best use He can of all the material sent up to Him day by day."

She awoke, and resolved to lay to heart the lesson of her dream, and henceforth to "lay up treasure in Heaven" more generously and more diligently than she had ever thought of doing before.¹

HEAVEN—ITS REST.

"Never mind, boys; the rougher the storm the sweeter the harbour." With these words, many a time spoken, an old sailor used to cheer his younger comrades, when the wind was blowing a gale and the crested waves threatened

¹ Anon.

to swamp their boat. One of those boys, now a middle-aged fisherman, when relating this to me, added: "I can tell you, sir, we soon learned how true his words were. You just need to be at sea in a bad storm to know the joy and sweetness of getting inside the harbour's mouth."

We may give the old sailor's words a higher meaning than he intended when he used them. It is not all sunshine and fair weather on the ocean of life. Many of us know what it is to be buffeted by the cold winds and angry sleet and snow and the crested waves of trouble, sickness, pain, disappointed hopes, and deferred ambitions. Never mind! Beyond all these things, for all God's children, the calm and peace and joy of Heaven are waiting. The rougher the storms of this life, the sweeter will be the entrance into that harbour of rest.

HOPE IN DEATH.

In the religious art of ancient heathen philosophy was a famous picture typifying the way in which the spirit of the age viewed death. On the ground lay stretched a corpse. Standing by was a Figure of noble mien, with a look of distressed perplexity, of dread uncertainty on his face. In one hand he held an expiring torch, and in the other a garland of flowers on which a butterfly was alighting.

The picture was allegorical. The Figure was that of Genius. The expiring torch represented the earthly passions and flickering hopes of man, burning for a brief time only and leaving behind nothing but cold ashes. The garland of flowers was an emblem of pleasure, sweet and attractive while it lasts, but soon fading into withered petals. The butterfly symbolised the grace and beauty of human desire, fragile and ephemeral. The spirit of philosophy, under the form of Genius, could find no clue to the mystery of death and could offer the dying and bereaved no hope of a life beyond the tomb.

Contrast with this picture any one of the three instances in the Gospel story of the dead raised to life, or that wonderful narrative of the empty tomb in the garden and the Risen Saviour standing by the weeping Mary with His message of comfort and hope; and you will see how in-

finitely superior is the hope of the Christian inspired by the words of our Lord: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

IMMORTALITY.

Lord Tennyson was standing with a friend on the edge of an Alpine chasm. "If," said he, "I could not believe in the life to come, I should fling myself down there."

But he did believe in immortality, and he expressed his faith in these well-known lines of incomparable felicity:

If e'er, when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part;
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stand up and answer, "I have felt."

LIFE NOW AND HEREAFTER—A WARNING.

In describing a visit he paid to Camp Hill prison in the Isle of Wight, Mr. Harold Begbie wrote: "The Governor said to me, initialling a prisoner's letter: 'Here is a man writing home and begging a younger brother not to forget that human life is made for futurity, that we are not animals, but souls shaping a destiny, and that it was because he forgot that fact and lived like an animal, that he came a cropper.'"

BELIEF IN A FUTURE LIFE.

John Stuart Mill (called "the Saint of Rationalism") had no belief in a future life. Natural religion was all that he believed possible for man. In his *Three Essays on Religion* he said that "of the life beyond there is no assurance whatever on the grounds of Natural Religion." And yet Dr. Martineau has told us that "Mr. Mill took such a keen interest in a book I was writing on Metaphysical and Logical Science that he exhorted me against long delay in publishing it, for he said: 'I do not want to wait for your lectures which will, no doubt, be published some

day; but before that time I may very likely be studying them in another state of existence.' ”

Does this not show that there are times when even the most sceptical mind yields to the instinct (divinely implanted) which sweeps on one side the cold, barren creed of the Rationalist and inspires the soul with the hope of immortality?

LIFE AFTER DEATH.

Some eminent scientists and surgeons have recently asserted that physical death is the end of human existence. They declare they can discover in man no such thing as a soul; all they can find is a brain; that when the body dies the brain ceases to function, there is nothing left; that is the complete end of man. This argument for materialism depends on the assumption that “thought self-consciousness is a product of the brain.” But is that so? Dr. J. D. Jones took up the challenge as flung down by Sir Arthur Keith, then President of the British Association, and replied to it in a sermon,¹ in which he used the following fine illustration:

“Can you really bring yourself to believe that the great products of human genius are nothing but the result of mechanical processes in the brain? Can you really believe that certain movements of the molecules of the brain produced Homer’s *Iliad*, Æschylus’ tragedies, Plato’s soaring speculations, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Handel’s mighty and massive harmonies, Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*? Do you really think you have accounted for the twenty-third Psalm and the fifty-third of Isaiah and the Sermon on the Mount, when you have talked to me about grey matter? Was there not a spiritual something, some self, some *ego*, which expressed itself in all this song and speech? Here is a violin and a bow, and here handling them is Sarasate or Kreissler. And under the artist’s fingers that violin gives forth the most entrancing music. It thrills, it melts, it subdues you. It brings smiles to your face, it brings tears to your eyes. For the violin, in the hands of the artist, sometimes sobs

¹ Sermon in the Richmond Hill Congregational Church, Bournemouth, May 13, 1928.

and sometimes exults, sometimes it suggests sorrow, and sometimes it suggests joy. Now where does the music come from? From the violin? Well, at any rate there could be no music without it. But not simply or even chiefly from the violin, but from the soul of the artist. The music must be in him before he can make the violin sob and sing. And if you want proof of that, put the same violin and the same bow into the hands of some other man, and instead of music it shall give forth discords and harsh sounds. And even if you put it into the hands of a man who knows how to play, it shall not give forth the music which Sarasate or Kreissler evoked from it. It was the soul of these men expressing itself through the violin which produced the music. Behind the violin stands the player; the kind of music which issues from it depends upon the man who plays it. And the violin is like the mind, or, rather, the mind is like the violin in this respect. Under present conditions there can be no thought without the brain—any more than there could be music without the violin. But it is not the brain that produces the thought any more than it is the violin which produces the music. It is something behind which uses the brain—call it soul, call it spirit, call it what you will, but it is what constitutes the inner core of personality. It was the soul of Homer which composed the *Iliad*, it was the soul of Dante which poured itself out in the *Divine Comedy*, it was the soul of Shakespeare which expressed itself in *King Lear*, it was the soul of Handel that composed the *Hallelujah Chorus*, it was the soul of Jesus that uttered the Sermon on the Mount. It is futile and foolish to talk about brain-movements in face of these things which express man's highest exaltations and aspirations. They are not the result of mechanical processes—they are the product of the 'spirit of man which is the candle of the Lord.'

"Now, if all that I have been trying to say is true, and I have been simply trying to give expression to what is the almost universal instinct of mankind, Sir Arthur Keith's argument that, with the ceasing of the brain to function, man ceases to be, falls absolutely to the ground. The violin may be broken, but what about the player? He may have found another violin of still finer quality from

which to call forth still more exquisite music. Which is exactly what this old Book says happens at death. This body perishes, the brain ceases to function, but that inner self, which inhabited this body and used it, has clothed itself with another body, the body which is from Heaven, clothed in which he can think yet nobler thoughts, and cherish yet finer aspirations and render yet nobler service. The violin we knew is laid aside, but the player has got hold of another with which he discourses yet sweeter music amid the hosts of Heaven.

“In brief, the materialist’s account of man is utterly incomplete, and fails to account for the facts. There is in man something which no anatomist’s scalpel will ever disclose, which no microscope will ever discover, which no chemist can ever weigh in his scales—the eternal soul. He is more than flesh and blood—he is spirit, and that spirit of his shares in the eternity of God.”

VII

MISCELLANEOUS

THE BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Speaking at the Annual Meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in May, 1928, Mr. Stanley Baldwin (then Prime Minister) emphasised the fact that the Bible is not "mere literature," but rather is it the greatest literature in the world. He went on to say: "It is, and always has been, of the nature of a high explosive. . . . In its journeying through the world the Bible has started the individual soul in ten thousand different places into a new life, a new world, a new belief, a new conception, and a new faith." He closed his speech in these memorable words: "If I did not believe that the Kingdom of God would spread over the whole world, I could have no hope and I could do no work."

THE BIBLE—"ANYWHERE."

After the battle was over, among the slain on the field lay a dead officer. In his hand was a copy of the New Testament. On the front page were printed these familiar words: "Appointed to be read in Churches." The words "in Churches" had been crossed out, and above was written the word "Anywhere."

Yes, "anywhere" this book may be read: in the home as well as in the church; not only in public worship, but in solitude; alike in the study of the scholar and the cottage of the poor; by the mother training her children in purity of heart and strength of character; by the broken-hearted in days of bereavement; by the bedside of the sick and dying.

THE BIBLE—ITS CONVINCING POWER.

At the Annual Meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, 1923, an Indian clergyman, the Rev. J. W. Lalli, M.A., told the story of a man who had been educated with him in a Christian college. After his

marriage this man's wife noticed that he frequently went to a room which he kept for his own private use. What he went there for she did not know, and she became suspicious, thinking that he went to look at the photograph of some other woman which he kept concealed. One day when he was out she went into the room to solve the mystery. In a small box there she found a book ; it was a copy of the New Testament. Her husband was a nominal Hindu, but lately he had grown lax in observing the usual religious rites. Evidently he was in the habit of reading the Book of the Christians whom she had been taught to regard as bad people. Overcoming her own fear and prejudice, she opened the book and began to read. This she did for several days ; at first from curiosity, but afterwards from a growing interest, until one day the Holy Spirit opened her eyes to see the beauty and truth of Jesus as her Saviour. When her husband returned home that evening she told him all about it. " Let there no longer be any misunderstandings between us," she said ; " I have learned the secret of a new and better life ; and I shall try to be a better wife to you and to make our home happier than it has ever been before. Jesus has taught me to feel like this in His Book."

BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

A man comes into the possession of an old historical mansion. In one of the rooms he finds a number of pictures, some of them family portraits, which were the joy and pride of their former owners. To his critical taste, however, many of them make no appeal. Without giving sufficient attention to what their real value might be, he has them taken down and sold by auction, fetching, for the most part, low prices. But among them were a few works by one of the old masters which, unknown to him, were of priceless worth, and, when too late, he discovers that he has lost what he can never replace.

The Church of our time has come into a very old inheritance of Faith, cherished by many generations of Christian people. We are told by experts in the study of ancient and sacred literature that our forefathers were mistaken in some of the dogmas or opinions they held. To some extent we must allow this to be true, and we should

gladly welcome all the new light that flows from a reverent and enlightened scholarship. But, unless we are careful, there is a danger of losing more than we gain. In throwing overboard past traditions of little or no value, the ultra-modernist is sometimes too ready to fling away also the heritage of truths which are of real and eternal value. In casting off the trammels of a too literal interpretation of some things in the Old Testament, he would also dispense with the miracles which we, who are not Fundamentalists, still firmly hold to be the natural accompaniments of our Lord's Incarnation. His unique Sonship (divine and eternal), His Virgin-birth, and His bodily Resurrection—these are essential facts of the historic Faith, and to give up any of them would be an irreparable loss to the Church and to the spiritual life of the individual Christian.

BIBLE DIFFICULTIES.

I once read of a man who said : “ I am very fond of fish ; but all fish have bones in them ; when I feel something hard in my mouth, do I say, ‘ There’s something wrong with this fish, I’ll have no more of it ’ ? Not at all. I say : ‘ That’s a bone ’—I put it on one side of my plate and go on eating and enjoying the fish. When the same thing happens again, I say : ‘ There’s another bone.’ But I don’t, for that reason, complain and say things about the fish.” He went on to say : “ I love the Bible ; it is my spiritual food. Sometimes I come across an incident which, I think, might well have been omitted, or a statement hard to understand ; it may be something which seems to contradict the science of our day. Am I for that reason to give up reading the Bible ? Must I accept unconditionally everything as of equal inspiration and authority ? I say : ‘ No ; these difficulties are like fish-bones.’ So I put them on one side ; they don’t worry me. And when I have discounted all the difficulties I meet with (and I admit there are many), they do not mar the spiritual value of the Book for me, nor do they prevent me from receiving the nourishment my soul needs, and which I certainly find in this Book, which I believe to be God’s chosen means of revealing His will to man.”

THE BIBLE—ITS INHERENT VITALITY.

One of the most romantic stories of the sea is the history of Pitcairn's Island. It was uninhabited until 1790, when nine of the mutineers of H.M.S. *Bounty* landed there with six men and twelve women (natives) whom they had taken with them when they escaped from Tahiti. Then followed what is described in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* as "a hell on earth." By distilling alcohol from a native plant strong drink was manufactured. Drunkenness and debauchery, accompanied by mutual hatred and quarrelling, killed off fourteen out of the fifteen men; so that, after ten years, only one Englishman remained, whose name was John Adams. Then a wonderful thing happened. In one of the sailors' chests he found a Bible. Reading it filled him with shame and remorse for his past wicked life. He became truly repentant and resolved to begin a new life and do his best for the women and children. He taught the children to read the Book which had been the means of his conversion. By its teaching they grew up into Christian men and women. Some twenty years afterwards an American ship, the *Topaz*, called at this island and brought back the first intelligence yet received of the mutineers who in 1790 had escaped the hangman's rope. But the *Topaz* also brought the good news that this little community, the offspring of murderers and debased heathen women, were a God-fearing people, displaying gentleness of character and virtuous lives. An interesting account of Pitcairn's Island in Chambers' *Encyclopædia* closes with these words: "The people bear a high character for virtue and uprightness, and choose their own pastor and magistrate." This wonderful transformation of human nature and character was all brought about by the reading of a book—the Bible.

THE BIBLE—ITS LITERARY VALUE.

Who calls the Bible dull reading? Certainly no one who knows how to appreciate noble literature. Many of our foremost writers of English prose and poetry have expressed their admiration for it and their indebtedness to it. Take the evidence of Sir Hall Caine. This is what he says: "I think I know my Bible as few literary men know

it. There is no book in the world like it, and the finest novels ever written fall far short in interest of any of the stories it tells. Whatever strong situations I have in my books are not of my creation, but are taken from the Bible. *The Deemster* is the story of the Prodigal Son. *The Bondman* is the story of Esau and Jacob; *The Scapegoat* is the story of Eli and his sons, but with Samuel as a little girl; and *The Manxman* is the story of David and Uriah."

THE BIBLE—A LANTERN.

The Rev. F. H. Gillingham (of cricket fame) was, before the war, an army chaplain. At one time he was stationed on Salisbury Plain. One night, after dining at the regimental mess, he had to walk four miles across the Plain to the house where he was then living. One of the officers said to him: "If you are going to walk across the Plain this dark night, you had better take my lantern; we always carry one across the Plain."

The chaplain declined the offer, strong in his sense of independence, feeling quite sure that he could find his way without the lantern.

In describing the incident he said: "I had not gone a quarter of an hour before I hopelessly lost my way. It was the darkest night I ever remember, and I could not see a star or the moon. I wandered over some barbed wire into a preserve. At last I saw a notice-board and climbed up it with great difficulty and struck half a box of matches before I could read the notice. What do you think it said? 'Out of bounds!' I knew that before I climbed the pole. I got down and soon found myself on top of a hill walking absolutely in the wrong direction. If only I had had that lantern I should never have left the right path."¹

How many men there are who lose their way in life, largely because they refuse to read but rather despise the guidance of that Book which the Psalmist describes as "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

THE BIBLE—ITS VALUE RECOGNISED.

An enterprising journalist once wrote to a hundred representative men in this country—members of both Houses of

¹ At the Annual Meeting of the Church of England Scripture Readers' Association, 1916.

Parliament, professional and business men, asking them to reply to this question: "Suppose you were condemned to three years' solitary imprisonment and could take with you only three books, which would you select? Please state them in the order of your preference." Ninety-eight out of the hundred put the Bible first of the books they selected. Many of them were not religious men at all; some, indeed, were antagonistic to the Christian Faith. And yet, when they thought of three years' solitary confinement, with only three books for companionship, they named the Bible as the first book of their choice.

CHILDREN IN DANGER.

Some small children were playing in a drawing-room with a trophy which had been brought home from the trenches by a soldier friend who had been serving in the war. An officer came into the room, and, taking the plaything into his hand, saw in a moment how great had been their danger. It was a live Mills bomb, and the donor had neglected to withdraw the high-explosive charge. The Major had come just in time to avert a tragedy. Writing about it afterwards he said: "If one of the little ones had pulled out the brass ring, that bomb, on counting five seconds, would have blown the place to pieces."

"How careless of the man who gave it to them!" we exclaim. Should we not equally condemn the criminal thoughtlessness of those who leave in the way of children things that may rob them of their innocence and imperil their souls? On many a drawing-room table are lying books which cannot be read without a suggestion of evil, and boys and girls will naturally want to read that in which they see their elders are interested. Let parents and friends exercise all possible care in the kind of books they leave in the way of children, considering the power for mischief wrought on young minds by impure or sceptical literature.

CHOOSING THE BETTER PART.

On the morning of Sunday, February 28, 1926, the P. and O. mail steamer *Maloja* was struck by a mine in the English Channel, and within half an hour she sank. At the time of the explosion a sailor who was on deck had to choose between his money and his life, calculating

whether he might go below for his purse in which was £8. He had almost made up his mind to take the risk and fetch the money, when a large raft which had been on the ship's deck floated past. He thought the opportunity too good to miss, and jumped on the raft. Almost immediately afterwards the ship turned over and sank. He then saw the wisdom of his decision; had he gone below for his purse he would certainly have lost his life.

A man is often called upon to choose between two alternatives, where the life, not of his body, but of his soul is at stake. There comes the temptation of some unlawful gain in business, or some coveted position of popularity to be obtained at the price of truth and honour, or some appeal to the lower passions. The inducement to "go below" for any of these things is very strong. And then God puts in his way the means of escape. It may be the recollection of an upright father's example, or the prayers of a saintly mother, or the look on the sweet patient face of a noble wife, or the warning voice of some faithful preacher. There is the raft floating past. He leaps to it, leaving behind him the lure of sin, and he lives to see that in so doing he accepted the way of salvation provided and saved his honour and his soul.

A CLEAN HEART NEEDED.

Before the capture of Jerusalem by the British Army under General Allenby, there had been no proper supply of water for the Holy City. Under Turkish misrule the people were compelled to rely on the uncertain rainfalls of winter to fill their cisterns. Nearly every house had its underground reservoir, but these were mostly in disrepair and required thorough cleansing to disinfect them from the deadly peril of disease-germs. A wonderful transformation was soon effected by H.M. ^{the} Royal Engineers. From a group of spring-heads on the neighbouring hills, by means of a long pipe, they brought down an unfailing supply of pure fresh water into the city. An offer was made to fill all the cisterns under the private houses (some of them holding from 60,000 to 70,000 gallons each) "on the condition that they were first thoroughly cleansed and put in order." When the sanitary officer was satisfied that this condition was complied with the Engineers ran a pipe

from the main supply into the cistern and it was filled with pure spring water.

Each human heart is designed by God to be a holy place. But all the reservoirs of our nature are tainted by sin. In His glorious power Jesus Christ has come, mighty to conquer and bring new life and happiness to those who yield themselves to Him. He desires to bring into our hearts from the everlasting hills the pure fresh waters of Divine Grace; but we must be willing to have clean hearts. The Grace of God can only flow freely into the heart of him who desires to be cleansed from all taint of evil and who believes that "the Blood of Christ Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."¹

EARLY TEACHING—ITS FRUITS REMAIN.

An officer attended a course of instruction on astronomy given during the war, the object being to teach the relative position of the stars to those who might sometimes need their guidance. At the time he thought the lectures dull and uninteresting. But, not long afterwards, he and a party of his men, while reconnoitring one dark night in No Man's Land, came under the enemy's fire. In their confusion the men lay down and began creeping along in the direction where they thought their own lines were. Then their leader remembered what he had learned about the stars. Looking up, he quickly found his bearings and discovered that his men had been making for the German lines. When he had got them all safely home, he was very thankful to the stars for their timely guidance.

In childhood and early youth we were taught the principles of our Christian faith. Some found them dull and uninteresting. But in after-life, when temptation is strong and the way is dark, many a man remembers what he learned as a boy; and, looking up into God's face for help, he sees the stars of truth and hope, and by their light he knows where he stands; he sees the path he ought to follow, and by their guidance he is led out of danger into safety.

EQUALITY IN HUMAN NATURE.

"A member of the British War Cabinet, now dead, himself an aristocrat of the old school, was on a visit to the

¹ 1 John i. 7.

front. He was shown one of the great bathing establishments which the army had installed behind the lines for the refreshment of the troops as they left the trenches. Watching the stream of healthy naked figures emerging from the baths, he betrayed himself by the naive remark: 'I never knew the lower classes had such white skins.'

"There is a parallel discovery waiting to be made as between men of differing race and culture—the discovery of the essential likeness and all-round loveliness of humanity, in proportion as men come to see one another, stripped of the externals of nationality, breeding, and tradition, just as God's children and through God's eyes. That vision God Himself must give."¹

EVOLUTION—AND MAN'S SPIRITUAL NATURE.

The most valuable spring wheat today is said to be the variety known as "Marquis." It was first produced in 1903, when there was only one known kernel of it in existence. By controlling and shortening the usual process of evolution someone had developed this new variety. Fifteen years later 300 million bushels of this wheat were grown in America.

If a man could do this, surely God could, by a special act of creation, make "a new variety," without being tied by any lengthened process of evolution. This is what we believe He did when "He created man in His own image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"—that is, life spiritual and divine.

FLOWERS AMONG THE ROCKS.

I once saw, at a friend's house, a collection of flowers which had been pressed and were preserved between the leaves of a book. They were so uncommon in their beauty and variety that I asked what they were and where they had grown. "We found them years ago," was the answer, "in the most unlikely place in which you would suppose flowers of any sort could grow. It was a rocky promontory on a lonely part of the coast of New Zealand. We had gone there on some expedition and were greatly surprised to

¹ The Bishop of Ripon (Dr. Burroughs) in a sermon preached at Prague, August 31, 1928, at the Triennial Conference of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches.

find these flowers growing in profusion among the rocks. We gathered some and have preserved them as specimens of a natural curiosity. They probably came there, originally, from seeds, blown off some passing ship, which found a congenial soil among the rocks, where they grew and flourished."

Sometimes, in places where we least expect to find them, we come across refined and beautiful characters. In the home, where every obstacle has been put in the way of religious influence, the saintly character of some child of God grows daily more beautiful, making the home-atmosphere fragrant with the sweetness it distils. In the dark court of a crowded city, where crime and vice are reckoned as necessary conditions of human nature, we have seen men and women honest and pure-minded, compelled to live amongst sights and sounds from which their instincts revolted, yet keeping their souls untainted and unstained.

These are specimens of flowers growing among the rocks on the bleak shore of human nature at its worst, out of touch with the strengthening, sweetening culture of higher civilisation or religious influence. They are miracles of the Grace of God, giving evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify whom He will. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and "nothing is impossible with God."

FRIENDSHIP.

In one of his books, *Gallipoli*, John Masefield wrote: "On the body of a dead Turkish officer was found a letter, written to his wife the night before he was killed; a tender letter, filled mostly with personal matters; after which he wrote: 'These British are the finest fighters in the world; we have chosen the wrong friends.'"

There are few things in life so important as the friendships we make. To choose well and wisely in this matter adds enormously to our happiness and usefulness. "A pure rich friendship is like warm spring sunshine as its glances fall upon our life" (Dr. J. R. Miller). Those who choose the wrong friends make a terrible mistake.

There is no wisdom higher than that of Abraham, who was called "the friend of God" (St. Jas. ii. 23). Can we attain the high distinction he enjoyed? Yes, we may; for

has not Jesus our Lord said : " Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you " ?

Since Thou art willing thus to condescend
To be my intimate familiar Friend,
Oh, let me to the great occasion rise,
And count Thy friendship life's most glorious prize.

ANON.

GIVING—GENEROUS AND ANONYMOUS.

Readers of the Annual Reports of George Müller's Orphanages at Bristol noticed, with frequent recurrence, extending over thirty or forty years, entries of large contributions by an unknown donor, " a servant of the Lord Jesus, who, constrained by the love of Christ, seeks to lay up treasure in Heaven." After Mr. Müller's death, his son-in-law, James Wright, who, for the last few years, had been his confidential secretary and co-worker, and who now succeeded him as general director, felt free to make known that this anonymous giver was George Müller himself. The total amount, extending over a period of nearly forty years, amounted to £81,490. This large sum of money had been given him at different times, or left to him by legacy, for his own use. But he gave it all away to one or other of the institutions founded by him. He had lived a most frugal life, never spending on himself more than was absolutely necessary, never putting by money, and at last dying a poor man.

GIVING—MEANLY.

There is an old story—it must have happened very long ago—of a French curé. He had lived in the same village for fifty years, and his devoted flock decided to celebrate the jubilee of his labours among them by presenting him with a wine-vat. It was placed in the centre of the village, and everyone was asked to contribute to its contents by pouring in a bottle of wine. The good old priest then invited his people to come together on the day of presentation, bringing wine-glasses with them to drink his health and to share in the joy of their gift to him. But when the tap was turned on, water only flowed into the glasses ; there was no wine there at all ! And the reason was that each one thought his contribution so small that it could

make no difference; so everyone had poured into the general stock a bottle of water and not of wine.

The moral of the tale is this. People who cannot do much frequently excuse themselves from doing anything at all by saying: "The little I could do or give will really make no difference in the world; so I may as well leave things to those who have large means or a great position, or special gifts of brain and character." If everybody argued in this way and acted accordingly, the result would be nil.

HARVEST LESSONS.

The summer of 1926 was unusually fine and sunny in the West Country; the corn was cut and carried in glorious weather; everybody expected a record harvest. During the following autumn, when in conversation with a friend who was a farmer, I referred to this. He surprised me by saying: "The harvest has fallen very far short of our expectations; the yield is poor, because the corn-seeds are small. No one could have predicted this; *only the thresher can tell what the harvest is.*" This last sentence he repeated emphatically. I asked him if he could account for so disappointing a result. He replied: "Yes, I think I can. Last spring we had a long spell of cold weather which nipped the young growing corn. When that happens, no amount of sunshine afterwards can make the grain swell so as to yield a good crop. *It was in the spring of the year that the mischief was done.*"

What my friend said became a parable to me, suggesting two lessons:

1. The impressions received in early life leave their mark permanently, and affect the character for all time. No advantages in after-life can ever compensate fully for the moral injury done to the soul of a child.

2. The real worth of a man's character and the true measure of his influence are not always rightly estimated during his lifetime; appearances are often deceptive; but everything will be revealed hereafter, in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. "Only the thresher can tell what the harvest is."

THE HEART.

A wretched thing it were to have our heart
 Like a thronged highway or a populous street,
 Where every idle thought has leave to meet,
 Pause, or pass on as in some open mart ;
 Or like some roadside pool, which no nice art
 Has guarded that the cattle may not beat
 And foul it with a multitude of feet,
 Till of the heavens it can give back no part.
 But keep thou thine a holy solitude,
 For He who would walk there, would walk alone ;
 He who would drink there, must be first endued
 With single right to call that stream his own ;
 Keep thou thine heart, close fastened, unrevealed,
 A fenced garden, and a fountain sealed.

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

HOME—HOW TO ENSURE HAPPINESS.

A Scotch laird wrote : “ Fishing one day in a moorland loch with an English friend, we took shelter from a heavy shower in a neighbouring cottage. I asked the good-wife to bake us some scones for luncheon. On the hearth was a pile of white peat-ash. She went down on her knees, blew it aside, and there were the red embers underneath. My friend seemed surprised and asked how long the fire had been alight, expecting, I suppose, that she would say since five o’clock or so that morning. But her reply was : ‘ It’s just seevin-and-twenty year come Marti’mas since Rab and me cam to this hoose, and the fire’s never been oot syn-syne.’ ”

It is easy to picture in one’s mind what happened. When the young married couple began life together in one home a peat-fire was lighted on the hearth. The good-man would cut fresh peat each autumn and stack it near the house, and the good-wife would daily bring in enough of it to keep the fire always burning. Never once had she let that fire out. Between them both it was a point of honour and sentiment to keep it always alive.

If married people would start their new life together by making sure of the presence of God in their home, and if they would guard that presence as a sacred fire to be cherished and never allowed to suffer neglect, they may

count always on the strength and help they need under every variety of life's chequered circumstances.

A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE.

One of the greatest doctors of the Jewish law was Hillel, born in Babylonia about 60 B.C. So great was his thirst for knowledge that, when he was about forty years of age, he came up to Jerusalem in order to study at the sacred college of the Hebrew doctors of law. He was so desperately poor that he could not always pay his entrance fee for the lectures of the Rabbis. One Sabbath eve, having no money for this purpose, he climbed up into the window so that he might listen to the lecture. The cold that night was so intense that he fainted and was not found until next morning, lying insensible. The students who discovered him soon revived him, and one of them remarked that "he is worthy that, on his account, the Sabbath should be broken." In the course of time this poor student was chosen to be president of the Sanhedrim—i.e., the fountain-head of Jewish learning and theology.

A POOR IDEAL OF LIFE.

Among the ruins of ancient Carthage there is a stone on which some Roman soldier had carved his philosophy. It was this: "To laugh, to hunt, to bathe, to game—that is life." What he felt and thought no doubt expressed the sentiments and ambitions of thousands of his class in those days. It was a poor ideal of life; and yet are there not multitudes among us today who are moved by no higher aspirations? Pleasure, amusements, sport—these things make up the sum of their existence.]

MATERIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

A big demonstration was being held in Hyde Park in connection with the International Congress of Socialists. Labour was there in considerable force, with its banners held aloft. On one of these was inscribed, "The Land for the People"; on another, "Justice for All"; and elsewhere, "Workers Unite." Standing in the crowd were two men, the one a clergyman, the other a popular representative of Materialism. The one looked at the other and said: "Are you a parson?" "Yes," was the reply, "I am a clergyman of the Church of England." "Then,"

said the Materialist, "may I ask you a question?" "By all means." "I want to know what you believe." "Not an easy question," said the clergyman, "to answer in a few words. But if you want a statement I can give you one. I believe in the Apostles' Creed. I feel it is the best expression of my faith." "Shall I tell you," said the other, "what I believe in?" "Certainly, do." "I believe in this grass growing under my feet, and in those iron railings, and the telegraph wires, and the stones over there. I believe in anything I can touch or taste or handle, and I think my creed is as good as yours." "Hold on a minute," said the clergyman. "What about that banner with 'Justice' on it? Do you believe in justice?" "Yes." "But you can't taste it or handle it, can you?" "No." "Do you believe in truth and righteousness and love?" "Oh yes, I believe in these things." "Well," said the clergyman, "if you believe in such things as truth and love and righteousness and justice, bind them all together, and put a Person behind them, and you will get something like the Christian's idea of God."

MODERN CULTS AND CHRISTIANITY.

"Whenever I think of the different cults—of which Spiritism is one—claiming today to supersede Christianity, I seem to see before me fragments of a beautiful window with which children are playing. One holds up a piece of glass of one tint, another of another, and they amuse themselves by looking at the world through the tinted medium, unconscious of the relation of the fragments to the whole design.

"There is scarcely a fashion in religion or philosophy today to which this parable does not apply. Theosophy picks out its bit of tinted glass, which we may call mysticism; Christian Science selects the dominance of spirit over matter; Ethical religion takes the attractiveness of the moral ideal; Modernism, the principle of accommodation; Spiritism emphasises immortality and the hidden life of the soul. Each of these is a truth. Each contributes to the rich harmony and meaning of the whole, proportioned by the rest of the Catholic faith. Each, when isolated from the rest, is useless, and by its want of proportion becomes untrue. . . .

“Consider this . . . as applied to Spiritism. . . . What does belief in a future life amount to when unrelated to its setting in revealed religion? I grant that the contemplation of a life indefinitely extended beyond this present stirs within us profound emotions; yet (as to Cortez the Pacific at which he stared was the abode of unknown forces of evil as well as good), so immortality, as a mere fact, sundered from a knowledge of God and from hope in Christ as ‘the Resurrection and the Life,’ is at best a dubious boon. . . . Merely to be certain of a future life is to be certain of a great uncertainty.”¹

NATIONAL GREATNESS.

Christ / Sovereign

In an open square in the city of Florence stands a stately building; it is the Town Hall. Above the archway, at the entrance, is a tablet, placed there to commemorate the moral and spiritual revival accomplished by the influence of Savonarola (at the close of the fifteenth century). The Republic of Florence had then been proclaimed to be a Christian Commonwealth, of which God was the Sovereign and His Gospel the law. On this tablet is engraved the inscription: “Jesus Christ, elected King of Florence, by the vote of the Senate and all the citizens.”

England is nominally a Christian country. The sovereignty of God and His providence in the affairs of the nation are acknowledged by the King and Parliament. All this is right; but something more is needed. It is that Jesus Christ should be crowned in the hearts of the people as their divine King and Saviour, and His laws honoured in the home, in commerce, industry, and politics. If that were done universally, then would our beloved country fulfil her highest destiny among the nations as the instrument of God’s purpose for the regeneration of the world.

THE OBJECTOR SILENCED.

When Archbishop Temple was Bishop of London he gave a lecture at the Oxford House on “Conscience and the Bible.” About a thousand men were present. At the close of the lecture a secularist arose and said that Jesus Christ borrowed all His teaching from the Greek philosopher, Pythagoras. With his usual dry humour Dr.

¹ The Rev. T. J. Hardy, *Spiritism*, p. 88, S.P.C.K.

Temple answered the objector by saying: "I have read all we have that Pythagoras is supposed to have written, and I do not think it would cover a single page of the New Testament. Will my friend over there tell us where he has discovered the rest?" The objector was covered with confusion, having no answer to give, and had to leave the hall under a railing fire of ridicule.

It is easy enough for the opponents of the Christian Faith to make wild assertions—as they so often do—for the purpose of casting doubts on truths revealed by God to us through prophets and apostles; but when these objections are carefully examined and weighed in the scales of an enlightened understanding, they are "found wanting."

REASON AND REVELATION.

A distinguished Cambridge scholar,¹ whose name was on the list of Wranglers when he took his degree, said to me one day in conversation: "When I first went up to the University I had the contempt common among public-school boys of those days for mathematics; but, in order to qualify for an honours degree in Classics, I had to pass a rather stiff mathematical examination. The preparation for this proved a harder task than I had anticipated, and I soon found my way blocked by some problem which I could not understand. In vain I tried to grasp it. Almost in despair one night I went to bed and had a dream in which I saw clearly every step of the way in which the problem should be worked out. When I awoke I straightway got up with everything fresh in my mind, and at my desk I committed to paper the whole process which had been revealed to me in my dream. From that night I had no more difficulty, and as you know," he added with a smile, "I took my degree in mathematics."

This incident suggests something more than a question of psychological interest. It illustrates the experience of some Christian people in the attainment of spiritual knowledge. Many a clever man, relying on his trained intellect, finds himself unable to grasp the ABC of the Christian Faith. His reason is baffled; he cannot understand so as to believe in Christ. Then, by a new and unexpected way, quite different from human philosophy, his eyes are

¹ The late Rev. F. C. Procter (of Prayer-Book fame).

opened. The revelation comes to him in a flash of inspiration; he sees and believes with great joy. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, illuminating his mind and giving him a clear understanding of the Truth; and he realises the meaning of the words: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."¹

RECONSTRUCTION—WITHOUT GOD.

In imitation of the old German legends of the supernatural, Mrs. Shelley wrote, in 1818, a romance entitled *Frankenstein*. According to the story, a young student, named Frankenstein, using the resources of natural science, created a being in the form of man. He obtained his result by picking up fragments of bodies in churchyards and dissecting-rooms and enduing them with life by means of galvanism. It was, however, nothing more than animal life, powerful for evil; in the end becoming the instrument of anxiety and torment to its author, visiting him with dreadful retribution for having dared to usurp the prerogative of the One Divine Creator.

The legend points a moral which is not without its meaning for the present time. Extreme forms of Communism—*e.g.*, Russian Bolshevism—avow their determination to reconstruct human society. In their revolutionary plans there is no place for God, no acknowledgment of His sovereign rule. Indeed, His very existence is denied. If their scheme of reconstruction were to succeed in the new and universal brotherhood of men, a soulless monster would be the result.

RELIGION—EARLY IMPRESSIONS ABIDE.

"One of my old pupils who had fallen (not through any misdeed of his own) into sore personal trouble, told me how, in the hour of his keenest anguish, he felt that the only thing which would give him comfort was to go down to Harrow on a Sunday evening and, during the service, to sit unobserved and unknown, at the back of the chapel where he had worshipped in the old days, and so to regain

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

something of the hope and strength which he had known as a boy among the boys who worshipped there.' ⁽¹⁾

When religious doubts disturb our peace of mind, or when temptations assail us, and our faith and character are in danger of shipwreck, there is nothing like getting back to the simple faith of our childhood. And this can often best be obtained in the House of God. It may be among other worshippers at a public service, or in the nearer approach to our Lord in the Holy Communion, or when there is no service, and we can kneel down in the stillness and quiet of some church, whose doors are kept open at all times for those who would seek the Presence of God. There faith can be recovered, courage restored, and hope renewed.

STATUESQUE CHRISTIANS.

The Cathedral at Milan is a noble building, its most conspicuous outer adornment being on the roof, on which there are ninety-eight spires or pinnacles, the whole vast space being further ornamented by a crowd of statues, built of marble, the number of which is said to be over two thousand. To climb to that roof and to walk among these beautiful figures of the sculptor's art is one great object of all visitors to the city of Milan. As I thought of them, after being there, they suggested to my mind a parable of what may be seen in many of our own churches. The statues on Milan Cathedral are beautiful and ornamental, but they do nothing to support the roof on which they rest; they leave that to the pillars and arches below. Neither do they help the worshippers, like the great organ, in leading the praises of the choir and congregation. They are cold, silent, lifeless, standing aloof on their pedestals away from the very heart of the Church life within the building.

Have we not in our churches on Sunday many people who resemble those statues? They are ornamental because they are well-dressed, and some of them occupy positions of wealth and station in the land. But spiritually—how cold they are! There is in them no fire of the love of Christ, very little sympathy for their suffering or sorrowing brothers and sisters in the family of God's household, the Church; no enthusiasm for the great cause of the world's

¹ Bishop Welldon, *Recollections and Reflections*, p. 120, Cassell and Co.

evangelisation, so dear to the Saviour's heart. No power can put life or warmth of love into the statues on Milan Cathedral. But there is a power by which these nominal Christians, so orderly and yet so cold and selfish, can be quickened into spiritual life and sympathies; it is the power of the Holy Spirit, inspiring souls with the constraining love of Christ.

SOCIALISM—WITHOUT GOD.

In the gloom and cold of a dungeon in Moscow, under the Soviet Government, an old man of eighty-five lay dying. The prisoners begged that a doctor, or at least a priest, might be sent to him. When a priest was asked for, the Bolshevik Commissary replied: "We've abolished the Almighty." When a doctor was requested, the Commissary answered: "Let the old man die—he's of no use to the State."¹

What a warning for the future there should be in these two answers, placed side by side! Atheism and Cruelty! The want of religion and the lack of pity! The repudiation of God and the callous abandonment of the primary instincts of humanity! The one produces the other as surely as the draught of poison causes death. May Russia be delivered, and may England be saved from the curse of a godless socialism!

SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.

"I was coming back, late one Sunday afternoon, from a preaching engagement, and was thinking of my evening sermon, when suddenly the only other person in the tram, a young man with golf clubs, leant forward and said to me: 'I suppose you think me very wicked for playing golf on Sunday?' I replied: 'As a matter of fact, I was not thinking about you at all. But I suppose from your remark that your own conscience troubles you?' 'Not at all,' he replied; 'I find I get more good from a day out in the fresh air than I ever got in a stuffy church.' 'Exactly,' I replied, 'and when you leave off thinking only of yourself and begin to think of God, you will be in a better position to judge of the duty of Sunday worship. If

¹ *The Times*, January, 1920.

someone reproached you for neglecting your father, would you say it did you more good to enjoy yourself than to waste time talking to an old man?"

"Some people say they can worship God better on the golf links or by the river than in church. If I believed such nonsense, which I don't, I should still be unwilling to 'offer unto God that which doth cost me nothing.'"¹

TIME AND ETERNITY.

An American scientist, who possessed a powerful telescope, one night received a visit from a friend who was an ardent politician. It was the time of a Presidential election, Bryan and Taft being the rival candidates, and party feeling was running high. The visitor looked through the telescope at several clusters of stars and other celestial objects. He asked a number of questions about them, and listened most attentively to the answers he received.

After a while he turned to his friend and said: "Now all these stars you have been showing me, what space on the sky do they occupy?" "About the apparent area of the moon when she is at the full," was the answer. "And do you tell me that each of them is a sun like our own?" "Yes." "And that most of them have planets circling round them as ours do round the sun?" "Yes." "And that on each of these planets there may be life?" "We cannot tell that for certain, but the probability is that many of them are inhabited." The politician sat for a few minutes, thinking it all over with himself. Then he arose and said: "After all, it doesn't really matter whether Bryan or Taft gets in."

In the vision he had then of the grandeur and vastness of the universe, the party rivalries and personal jealousies being fought out on one corner of this earth seemed to him insignificant and transitory.

When we are tempted to exaggerate the importance of passing events, or to get downhearted about our personal trials and difficulties, let us try and take a wider vision of life and to see everything in the light of this great fact: "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." The incidents we are now inclined to magnify unduly, and also our own

¹ Canon Peter Green, "Difficulties of Life and Belief," in *The Guardian*.

sorrows and perplexities, can last but a short time longer. But God's love will abide always.

THE VOICE OF GOD—IGNORED.

You "switch off" on your wireless when the announcer is speaking; and, by so doing, you cease to hear his voice. But you have not silenced that voice. It continues speaking from its central position: others are listening while no sound enters our ears. And this is entirely your own doing. You cannot blame the announcer for not being heard by you, so long as you prevent the sound of his voice from being transmitted through your instrument.

The voice of God may always be heard by those who listen. But how many never want to hear it! They "switch off" their own desire for spiritual realities and frequently blame God because they cannot hear His voice as others do.

WANT OF VISION.

When the landing of our troops was made at Suvla Bay (Gallipoli), Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett was allowed to go, as a special correspondent, on board the s.s. *Minneapolis*, which sailed from Kephalos Bay on the night of August 6, 1915. She was a huge Atlantic transport with first-class accommodation. Mr. Bartlett was shown into a cabin fitted up with every luxury and comfort. At 6.30 the following morning, on his way to the saloon for breakfast, he saw an ancient steward busily engaged in carefully removing the dust from the carpets with a vacuum cleaner. Through the open portholes beside him could be seen the action going on ashore—the bursting shells, the enemy replying, our own infantry advancing to the attack. One of the most momentous events in the history of the Empire at that time was taking place; but, as for forty years that old steward had cleaned the gaudy carpets at the head of the stairs at that hour, so he continued doing it now, without paying any regard to what was going on. "The war outside," wrote Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett, "was no affair of this man; and, like all the other stewards on board, he took not the slightest interest in it."

How many people there are who take no interest and have no share in the struggle that never ceases between the

forces of good and evil in the world around them ! They are so absorbed in their own personal cares and enjoyments that they cannot see the eternal issues at stake. That old steward acted partly from the habit born of a life-long sense of duty, partly from a sort of humble philosophy. But no excuses of this kind can justify anyone among us from taking his place in the ranks of those who are fighting under the banner of Christ against the legions of death and hell.

THE WIDER OUTLOOK.

The owner of a private aquarium was showing a friend some bream which were in a small glass bowl. These fish, he said, had been kept there for some time. Near by was a large tank full of water. The owner removed the fish one by one from the glass bowl and put them into this tank. Instead of darting about to the full extent of the tank, as might have been supposed, the bream continued swimming round in little circles just the size of the bowl from which they had been taken. It was some time before they discovered they could venture further, and even then they did not swim to the sides, but just increased the size of their circles gradually. After this they seemed to enjoy and luxuriate in their additional freedom.

Some people are born and brought up in a very circumscribed environment ; their early training is on strictly sectarian lines ; they are like the bream in the small glass bowl. It is hard for them to realise that there is a larger world of thought than their very limited way of looking at things. These are religious bigots, and religious bigotry or sectarian temper about things of divine revelation is one of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the Gospel in the world.

Others have learned to see things in a truer perspective ; they have gained the wider outlook which comes with a stronger, clearer vision. And yet their faith in things essential has not changed. The large tank is filled with the same living water as that which was contained in the small glass bowl. For them Jesus Christ is " the same yesterday and today and for ever."

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